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BOSTON UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE SCHOOL

THESIS

THE HUMANISM OF  
CHARLES FRANCIS POTTER

AND

ROY WOOD SELLARS

by

ABNER JAMES LANGLEY  
(Th.B., Gordon College, 1934)

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
1935



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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

#### A. Problem of Thesis.

The problem of this thesis is to investigate the type of religious faith, commonly called humanism, held by two modern thinkers, Charles Francis Potter and Roy Wood Sellars. It has been the writer's thought in selecting this subject that these two men, one a theologian and the other a philosopher, would serve as representatives of this new religion. The introductory chapter will be a survey of humanism in general; the second chapter an analysis of Potter's theology; the third chapter an analysis of Sellars' theology, while the fourth chapter will be a comparison of the two. The fifth chapter will be an evaluation and criticism of humanism as held by Potter and Sellars, and the concluding chapter will be a summary of the thesis.

#### B. Definition of Humanism.

Humanism is a word which is often used, but seldom defined. It is astonishing that so much confusion prevails among writers on the subject.<sup>1</sup> To understand the content and purpose

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<sup>1</sup>It is surprising to find such a work as that edited by King, HABL, failing to distinguish between the different types of humanism. (The system of abbreviations used in this thesis throughout is explained in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.)



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

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of this paper, it is necessary that the different types of humanism be clearly defined.

To the average student the word humanism designates the movement which arose during the Renaissance. Used to define such a movement it means the revival of a study of the classics, especially the Greek.<sup>2</sup> Erasmus was the chief exponent of the new culture.

The term, however, can be used to describe the intellectual movement of the Fifth Century B. C. in Greece. This was initiated by the Sophists and carried on by Socrates. The spirit of this movement is well-expressed in that famous maxim given to posterity by Protagoras, that "man is the measure of all things."

Twenty-three centuries after the Sophists and three centuries after the Renaissance there was a revival of humanism in England and France. It began with the Deistic movement in England. Pope's famous work, "Essay on Man," in which occurred that often-repeated line, "The proper study of mankind is man," was a product of this age. The results of the English Enlightenment were brought to France by Voltaire, who became the leader of the brilliant group of Frenchmen known as the Encyclopedists. In France, humanism became anti-religious. Indeed, in the method of their attack on established beliefs and in their philosophical materialism, they seem to have been the logical ancestors of Twentieth Century religious humanism.

F. C. S. Schiller, the English thinker, caused a revival of the term "humanism" in the last decade of the Nineteenth





Century by his use of it to describe his theistic pragmatism.<sup>3</sup> Among the many modern groups who use this term, Schiller was the first, which entitles him to a place in this chapter.

A further type of humanism and one which has been the subject of considerable discussion during the last decade is literary humanism. It is this type of humanism which is so frequently confused with religious humanism. This expression of humanism is a conservative reaction against the crude modernism in literature. It is a determined effort on the part of some present day leaders to eliminate the unlovely from modern literature. Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More are the leaders.<sup>4</sup> These men do not agree with the religious humanists, their leader ranging himself on the side of the

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<sup>2</sup>Reese is mistaken, HR, 26, in saying that historically the word was used to emphasize the non-theological cultural arrangements. This would imply that it meant culture as opposed to religion. In Northern Italy the humanism of the Renaissance was definitely religious, the chief object of study being the Bible.

<sup>3</sup>Schiller, HUM, SIH. At present, Schiller, like his fellow countryman, Whitehead, is a transplanted Englishman, being professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California.

<sup>4</sup>The best survey of literary humanism will be found in a symposium of fifteen essays by as many authors, HAA, Foerster (ed.) Hough, whom I have numbered among the Christian humanists, could be equally well placed with this group.

<sup>5</sup>Schiller, HUM, SIH.

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The word "humanism" is used in a variety of ways. In its most general sense, it refers to the study of man and his world. In its more specific sense, it refers to the study of the human mind and its development. In its most restricted sense, it refers to the study of the human mind and its development in relation to the physical world.

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supernaturalists.<sup>5</sup> Babbitt objects to the appropriation of the word humanism by the religious cult.<sup>6</sup>

Still another class of thinkers are known as Christian humanists. These men are mostly preachers who emphasize the social side of the gospel message.<sup>7</sup>

The last important type of humanism<sup>8</sup> is the one with which this thesis is concerned. Religious humanism is positivistic and naturalistic, giving values a human rather than a cosmological setting. This type of humanism is a development of the earlier movement, the positivism of Comte.<sup>9</sup> This French philosopher held that knowledge is relative; all we have is gained through our sense experience. Thus he found no place for the supernatural. Religious humanism tends to take the same attitude. Some writers think that this type of humanism is a combination of Comte's positivism and the theistic pragmatism of James and Schiller.<sup>10</sup> The theology of humanism

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<sup>5</sup>Babbitt in Ibid., 39.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 31.

<sup>7</sup>Stafford, CH; Hough, EH; McConnell, HAC.

<sup>8</sup>This does not exhaust all the lists. For instance, it does not include the type of humanism propounded by Samson, NH. The ideal, as held by this writer, is a workless world in which the chief occupation of man would be to engage in original, beautiful, and endless conversation.

<sup>9</sup>This theory is repudiated by the humanists themselves. Wilson claims that he has made a thorough investigation of positivism and finds that it is very different from humanism. He says, "Comte's system grew not from an understanding of the needs and life problems of other people but from the intellectual demands of his own system," PAH, 30.

<sup>10</sup>Johnson, HCT, 42; MacIntosh in HUM, King (ed.), 43.



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<sup>6</sup>Rebert in Ibid., 22.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 21.

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<sup>11</sup>Johnson, RCT, 42; MacIntosh in HUM, KING (24), 23.



defies definition. On such a fundamental subject as theism there is no unanimity of opinion. Dr. Deitrich who has been called the father of the modern movement says,

"Humanism does not recognize the existence of the supernatural and does not believe that there is any personal being outside the universe who controls or governs it."<sup>11</sup>

Some of his followers do not agree with him. Auer says, "A humanist is not one who necessarily denies the existence of God, he may deny it, he may doubt it, or he may accept it."<sup>12</sup>

As in Fichte's system, humanism first postulates the self. The existence and greatness of man cannot be doubted. In the words of Protagoras, "Man is the measure of all things." Its theology deals with man rather than the Superman. The English poet Pope expressed the sentiment of modern humanism when he said, "The proper study of mankind is man." Humanism exalts the merely human and counsels us to believe in man rather than in God. "Life" is a word which is frequently on the lips of a humanist. "The content of humanism is life and its chief objective loyalty to life."<sup>13</sup> This life is not to be gained by any faith in unseen gods. It is to be obtained by living according to the commandments of science.<sup>14</sup>

There are several well-known philosophers who although not in the official humanist catalogue tend to accept most

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<sup>11</sup>Deitrich in HS, Reese (ed.), 97.

<sup>12</sup>Auer, HSIC, 79; see also 104, 147.

<sup>13</sup>Reese, HUM, 23.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 19; Reese, HR, 93-95.



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<sup>12</sup>Ascher, H.A.C. 73; see also 104, 147.

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<sup>14</sup>ibid., 19; Reese, ib., 23-25.



of humanism's creed. Bertrand Russell with his pessimistic philosophy and his humanistic theology is an embarrassment to humanism. E. S. Ames is another whose humanism is difficult to define.<sup>15</sup> Walter Lippmann, one of the most brilliant of modern writers, professes allegiance to no particular camp, but his writings mark him as being in sympathy with the humanist position. His most famous book<sup>16</sup> is somewhat of an attempt to revive Stoicism. Mr. Lippmann derives much comfort from the humanist attitude, but Mr. Joseph Krutch in his remarkable book<sup>17</sup> analyzes Lippmann's work with more insight. His conclusions are pessimistic in the extreme.<sup>18</sup> Still another humanist is A. E. Burt, who although a signer of the Manifesto, has a peculiar type of humanism.<sup>19</sup> Religious humanism seems to be a coat of many colors which covers all tribes and clans of the humanistic commonwealth.

To conclude this brief statement of the tenets of hu-

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<sup>15</sup> Ames seems to be a pantheist. The word "God" is not taken to mean a particular person or a single factual existence but the order of nature including man and all processes of social life. REL, 176-177.

<sup>16</sup> Lippmann, PFM.

<sup>17</sup> Krutch, MT.

<sup>18</sup> See Brightman, POG, 44-51, for a brief but keen analysis of their position.

<sup>19</sup> The thesis of Burt's book, RAS, is that the scientific method should be supreme in all of life. Thus everything in religion that is not held as a tentative belief should be eliminated. Beliefs are justified only when they are flexible and provisional. "I should be willing to cast a temporary doubt at least, on my faith, to surrender God for myself unless and until through the resolution of my friend's difficulty he should be discovered by us both. My faith in God would become contingent upon his." 150.



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manism, it might be well to set down the five fundamentals of humanism as outlined by Reese: (1) the authority of evidence; (2) the supremacy of intelligence; (3) the validity of freedom; (4) the leadership of the competent; (5) the common-wealth of man.<sup>20</sup>

### C. A Humanist Manifesto.<sup>21</sup>

1. Purpose of the Manifesto.--The official creed of humanism first made its appearance in May, 1933, when the Associated Press carried a dispatch telling about the new religion, humanism. The writers of the Manifesto realizing that the radical changes in religious beliefs in this country and throughout the world, believed that the old religion, Christianity, must go the way of all tradition. Science, combined with increased experience, has altered our outlook on the world. These fundamental and far-reaching changes necessitated some new religious affirmations. The purpose of the Manifesto was to present certain beliefs which experience thus far seems to demonstrate.

2. Content of the Manifesto. The Manifesto contained fifteen affirmations. These statements included pronouncements on cosmology, cosmogony, and teleology. The main emphasis was laid on the realizing of life and the development of personality. It is interesting to note that only one of the fifteen

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<sup>20</sup> Reese, HUM, 3. Such principles are so general that most any religion could adopt them without any serious disruption of its creed.

<sup>21</sup> Appendix.







theses was devoted to a discussion of the social side of religion. A careful study of the Manifesto reveals that it was an attempt to give humanism a theological and philosophical basis. It is a negative theology in the light of tradition but a positive theology in the light of science.

3. Signers of the Manifesto. It is an imposing and important array of names which greets the eye as one scans the signers of this Manifesto. Eleven college professors, twelve ministers, and eleven leaders in the literary and educational world make up the list. The ministers come from the liberal Unitarian and Universalist churches. The most eminent name in the roster is that of John Dewey. Mr. Dewey is the leading philosophical thinker in America and his name among the signatories demands that the document receive careful study. Drs. Potter and Sellars are two of the thirty-four who gave their names to this Manifesto.

#### D. Sources of the study.

The men who are studied in this thesis are well-known in the fields of religion and philosophy.

Dr. Charles Francis Potter was for twelve years a Baptist minister, and on leaving this denomination he spent eleven years as a clergyman of the Unitarian church. At the end of that time his liberal tendencies compelled him to resign his charge and leave the Unitarian ministry. In 1929 he founded the First Humanist Society of New York and became its first leader. As a lecturer and writer he has received wide acclaim



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### B. Sources of the study.

The men who are studied in this thesis are well-known in the fields of religion and philosophy. Dr. Charles Francis Potter was for twelve years a Baptist minister, and on leaving this denomination he spent eleven years as a clergyman of the Unitarian church. At the end of that time his liberal tendencies compelled him to resign his charge and leave the Unitarian ministry. In 1922 he founded the First Humanist Society of New York and became its first leader. As a lecturer and writer he has received wide acclaim.

due to his free and popular style. His theological tenets are developed in two books, Humanism--A New Religion and Humanizing Religion.

Dr. Roy Wood Sellars has been successively assistant, associate, and professor in the department of philosophy at the University of Michigan. Although possessing a very poor style as a writer, he commands a wide influence due to his ardent defence of an extreme realism and his development of the theory of evolutionary naturalism. He is the author of several volumes of which the most important ones from the standpoint of this study are The Next Step in Religion and Religion Coming of Age.

The above named book together with Humanism and Humanist Religion by Curtis W. Reese and the short but important volume, Humanism States Its Case, by F. A. C. Fagginer Auer, constitute the primary sources for this study. Many recent works in theology and philosophy have been studied as secondary sources.



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Dr. Roy Wood Bellamy has been successively assistant, associate, and professor in the department of philosophy at the University of Michigan. Although possessing a very poor style as a writer, he commands a wide influence due to his extreme balance of an extreme realism and his development of the theory of evolutionary naturalism. He is the author of several volumes of which the most important ones from the standpoint of this study are The New Religion in Religion and Religion Coming of Age.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE HUMANISM OF CHARLES FRANCIS POTTER

#### A. Potter as a Theist.

The following divisions of this chapter are interpretations of humanism as held by Potter. It will be interesting at this place to mention the creed he defended up to the time that he left the Unitarian Church in 1929. That Potter was not always a humanist is evidenced by an address which he made before the Unitarian Layman's League in 1921.<sup>1</sup> In this sermon Potter definitely declared himself an ardent supporter of the theistic position. He was in hearty agreement with the new Unitarian creed, especially the first article in it which states that "We worship the living God, our Father and Friend." This statement Potter labelled "positive, definite, constructive, and comprehensive."<sup>2</sup>

Religion as Potter defined it at that time, is power. It is not a matter of dead form and hoary ritual but a tremendous sense of the presence and power of God in the soul of the individual. This power enables the individual to live as a helpful member of society. God is a living, loving Person. Jesus is the one who teaches men about this love of God, thus

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<sup>1</sup>Foster, 1881.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

enabling men to enter into the fullness of life.<sup>3</sup>

Men ask how to grow spiritually. How does the higher person grow? By praying to the living God and by worshipping that same God. This theology although just as theistic as Calvinism has little respect for Calvinism, which is forbidding and harsh. The New Unitarian creed is not complete because no system is final in itself. New light may always break forth.

This, in brief, was Potter's position before 1928. At that time he was so confident that theism was the only way that he challenged the young people to accept this robust faith as that which would give them poise and power in the present age.

#### B. A Humanist's Attitude toward the Eternal.

1. Theism a dead issue. From 1928 on Potter began to lose his robust faith in theism. This continued until he found himself unable to support the very loose doctrinal tenets of the most liberal Unitarian churches. His resignation followed. Unable to believe in traditional theism but unwilling to drop all religious beliefs, Potter cast his lot with a group of educators and ministers who were endeavoring to establish a new religion. This movement became known as humanism, and Potter became its popular interpreter.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 21.



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As humanism's distinctive mark is its non-theistic creed, it would be well to begin this chapter with an interpretation of Potter's attitude toward the Eternal. Humanism, Potter says, faces the problem of God with frankness, eager to ascertain the facts but skeptical of traditional theories. The theists start with God, which is begging the question. Humanists "do not say there is a God, they do not say there is not a God, they simply say they do not know."<sup>5</sup> If humanists must be classified, the great majority would rank as agnostics.<sup>6</sup> With so much uncertainty and with the majority of evidence against theism, the way of progress is to blaze our paths with the conviction that man alone is responsible for the future. In the early days of the race the idea of God had its purpose, but it was a temporary purpose, a means to an end--the belief in the divinity of man. Theism as a creed and a system can now be dispensed with.<sup>7</sup>

Not only is theism a belief which must be abandoned, but in reality it is a dead issue. As science has progressed, theism has been more and more discredited, until today it is logically dead. Theism however is upheld by more than a creed, it is buttressed by an institution, the church. Organizations are notoriously conservative and especially is this true of religious organizations. Thus, while spiritually, theism is

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<sup>5</sup>Potter, HUM, 8.

<sup>6</sup>Cf. ante, Chap. I, 5.

<sup>7</sup>Potter, HUM, 58.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 38.



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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 8.

dead, institutionally it is still very much alive. This tragedy of a creed perpetuated in an institution after it has been cast out of the hearts of humanity is a serious handicap to human progress.<sup>8</sup> It is the old familiar story of the servant becoming master. There was a day when the church as an institution and as the embodiment of a creed was necessary. Today when science has shown us a better way, the church blocks the way of further spiritual advance.

2. Theism unnecessary. Potter realizes that to say theism is an untenable position does not necessarily mean that it is to be dispensed with. Psychologists like Coe and philosophers like Vaihinger would retain the idea of God for its functional value. Vaihinger claimed that the three postulates of Kant, God, freedom, and immortality are not true, but we must act "as if" they were true. A humanist would look upon such ideas as hindrances to a recognition of man's powers. Such half-hearted beliefs cast doubt upon the ability of man to achieve stability without the aid of traditional dogmas. But this belief that man requires some outside power to aid him if he is to achieve is an ancient one, therefore mankind is reluctant to see it relegated to the scrapheap. As long, however, as humanity clings to any belief in a personal, loving God so long will the growth of personality be hindered.<sup>9</sup>

To many the loss of the God-idea means that man is called upon to question (1) the predicates of God and (2) the

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cosmic energy. Relinquishing the idea of God as personal does not demand that we surrender the predicates of God.<sup>10</sup> When we remember that man projected into the God-idea his highest feelings and impulses we realize that these qualities find their source in men. Because man has been accustomed to think of God as love does not imply that the end of God is the end of love. It simply means that we give honor to whom honor is due--man. A humanist does not deny cosmic energy. He senses the power which pervades the universe.

Although the cosmic energy is not God, the religious instinct is correct which turns toward it; for religion itself in a supremely inclusive sense, is the relation of man to this primal urge.<sup>11</sup>

Cosmic energy must not be confused with a personal deity.

3. Man as a substitute for God. Thus far the necessity of discarding this traditional God idea has been clearly shown. Potter realizes that it is the task of philosophy to take a positive step. The abandonment of the God-idea leaves room for man. Man is center and circumference of a humanist's philosophy. As a product of the monkey world, man has produced a certain type of civilization.<sup>12</sup> The problem of why man came from the greater apes is solved when we study the characteristics of both. Monkeys and men possess three things in common, curiosity, speech, and action.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Potter, HUM, 119.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 57.

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Possessing these three qualities man is well able to work out his own salvation. The throne left vacant by the abolition of God can be adequately filled by man. Humanism is a trumpet call to belief in man as the epitome of personality,<sup>14</sup> the substitute for God,<sup>15</sup> and the builder of the great civilization.<sup>16</sup> Man is the greatest manifestation of the cosmic energy.<sup>17</sup> This power, which outside of man is blind and impersonal, in man comes to its full consciousness. The mistake of the past has been to think of this power as resident in some person who dwelt eternally in the heavens. At the present time when science has deprived us of our cherished beliefs, humanism announces the glad news that man is prophet, priest, and king. A humanist can with Swinburne say, "Glory to man in the highest."

So long as knowledge was believed to come by revelation and salvation from God, man had little use of his powers. Such traditional dogmatism being now outworn man's power and genius may flower forth in full beauty. Man now realizes that knowledge comes from the spirit of adventure which leads to discovery. The common man when he wishes new truth does not gaze at the skies, but inquires at the laboratory. Theism has been an enemy of new truths, however, because of the fear

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<sup>14</sup>Potter, HUM, 55.

<sup>15</sup>Potter, HR, 26.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 144.

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that some dogma might prove untenable. Salvation has failed as the generator of the right attitude toward society. Humanism has a better way--education. Through education man's powers can be developed and his inclinations guided.

The substitution of man for God will aid the cause of democracy. Democracy in politics and aristocracy in religion serve as checks on each other, thus both suffer. When the will of man becomes the ultimate guide for life, then will political and religious democracy be established.<sup>18</sup>

Does man's progress and achievements in the past justify this optimistic prophecy for his future? Hardly! But it must be remembered that under a theistic regime man has never been free to demonstrate the extent of his powers. Again it is to be remembered that humanism is no sickly religion that requires a lip service only. Humanism demands faith.<sup>19</sup> It demands faith in man not because of what he has accomplished but because of what he shall accomplish. It calls upon us to believe in man despite his repeated failures. But will the future bring consistent triumphs? Again the answer must be no. The future will bring development and in development is growth and in growth is advance and by advancing man will ultimately arrive at the goal of perfection. When such a time arrives man will have become god in the flesh.

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<sup>19</sup>Potter, HR, 31, 135, 169.



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### C. A Humanist's Attitude toward Jesus.

Potter points out that the Christian attitude toward Jesus is that of a sinner toward a saint. This attitude he condemns as "essentially immoral, unintelligent, and superstitious."<sup>20</sup> The religion of the past has been steeped in the theory of a blood-sacrifice. Such a theology belongs to animism, but not to humanism. A loving God, a suffering son, a vicarious atonement; these conceptions belong to the pre-scientific era. Such a popular hymn as "The Old Rugged Cross" smacks of cannibalism. The cross has lost its appeal. It met the demands of an unenlightened first century, but now society demands higher standards for its religion. Moreover the theory is preposterous because it is based on the principle that one can get something for nothing. It is unethical for one man to take advantage of another man's death. If the Christians were right, and their Father suffered for their sins, it was decidedly poor pedagogy on the part of God.<sup>21</sup>

It is true that Jesus appeared to have possessed some mysterious power. He attributed this power to God. It must be kept in mind that Jesus was a child of his age. He spoke the vocabulary of the first century. That vocabulary contained such words as "God", "salvation", "blood-sacrifice", "heaven", "demons". Jesus did not have the opportunity of studying psychology, therefore he did not know many of the

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 213.

<sup>21</sup>Potter, HUM, 28.







foundation principles of the work of our minds or our emotional natures. Being ignorant of these principles he failed to realize that his power came from within himself. Jesus had developed his personality until he had poise and control. The explanation of his power was in his developed personality.

The orthodox Christians accept Jesus as divine, the liberal Christians accept him as the perfect guide. To a humanist the first view is superstition, while the second view is ~~ethically false~~. The first implies that Jesus was supernatural; the second that he was perfect. With neither theory would humanism agree. Jesus made mistakes as other religious leaders have done. He said things which were impracticable and impossible.<sup>22</sup> He did things which were irrational.<sup>23</sup> We cannot follow Jesus today because he is not an adequate guide. When Jesus is placed against the background of his time he is a great man, but an analysis of his moral judgments show that they do not equal those of the twentieth century.<sup>24</sup> A humanist would deny that he is an unique and sinless leader, but would be willing to exalt those of his acts which seem worthy.

#### D. A Humanist's Attitude toward the Present.

1. Human personality. Potter's main emphasis in his writings is on personality.<sup>25</sup> It is the starting point of his thinking and the goal of his philosophy. Humanism makes

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<sup>22</sup>Potter, HR, 223-224.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 220.

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23 Potter, pp. 228-229.

24 Ibid., 230.

25 Ibid., 231.

two fundamental statements regarding personality, (1) its supreme value and (2) its self-perfectibility.<sup>26</sup> Personality is such a wonderful thing that it explains and justifies man's existence.<sup>27</sup> It is not static but is the result of an evolutionary process, and even now is changing.

The present status of our personality is what it is because of what it was. Every individual has certain characteristics. Some are worthy, others unworthy. These characteristics are not the achievements of the individual but of the race. As evolution progresses, man develops; but as he grows to manhood he does not always put away childish things. This evolutionary development of the race may be compared to the growth of the individual from childhood to manhood. The years bring new experiences which increase knowledge. Increased knowledge develops the personality. But in the personality of the man are the characteristics of childhood. The boy is father of the man. So it is in the history of the race. New experiences widen horizons, increase knowledge and develop personality but it does not eliminate past experience. Human-

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<sup>26</sup>Potter, HUM, 24.

<sup>27</sup>Potter, HR, 106; HUM, 16.



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<sup>27</sup> Potter, HR, 106; HUM, 18.

ity today is the possessor of the total experience of the race throughout the ages.

What is true of the race as a whole is true of men as individuals. In each man's personality we may read the history of the race, for each man is the resurrection of all that has come before him in the evolutionary process. Each of us could say with Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life." Nothing of the past is lost to the present unless man fails to use his heritage.

Personality is supreme because it is the symbol and sign of life, and life is divine. To live is to have a personality; to have a personality is to be alive. To think of life on one hand and man on the other is to create a dualism. We should not speak of knowing life or having life but of being life, not "I am like Brahma" but "I am Brahma."<sup>28</sup> It is thus that man is one with all life.<sup>29</sup> Everything is alive, even inanimate objects. Every part of life is related to the whole of life. Because all life is one, the old dualism appears as a false distinction.<sup>30</sup> Man versus animal, mind versus body, matter versus life are outgrown distinctions.

It is to be put to the credit of man that he has always recognized the greatness of personality as the sign of life, and has revered life as divine. Indeed, man has been so

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<sup>28</sup>Potter, HR, 254.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 262.

<sup>30</sup>Loc. Cit.



ity today is the possessor of the total experience of the race throughout the ages.

What is true of the race as a whole is true of man as individuals. In each man's personality we may read the history of the race, for each man is the resurrection of all that has come before him in the evolutionary process. Each of us could say with Jesus, "I am the resurrection and the life." Nothing of the past is lost to the present unless man fails to use his heritage.

Personality is supreme because it is the symbol and sign of life, and life is divine. To live is to have a personality; to have a personality is to be alive. To think of life on one hand and man on the other is to create a dualism. We should not speak of knowing life or having life but of being life, not "I am like Brahman" but "I am Brahman."<sup>28</sup> It is thus that man is one with all life.<sup>29</sup> Everything is alive, even inanimate objects. Every part of life is related to the whole of life. Because all life is one, the old dualism appears as a false distinction.<sup>30</sup> Man versus animal, mind versus body, matter versus life are outgrown distinctions.

It is to be put to the credit of man that he has always recognized the greatness of personality as the sign of life, and has revered life as divine. Indeed, man has been so

<sup>28</sup> Foster, HR, 254.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 215.

impressed with the thought of life that he has embodied his idea in a person. God to the common man is the source and sustainer of life, therefore a personality to be worshipped. Christianity has held that the individual could only have life and have it abundantly when he came in contact with God. This the humanist believes to be a false idea. The glorious gospel of humanism is that "I am life and I can have more life by having more of myself."

This thought brings us to the second part of Potter's philosophy of personality. The great worth of personality makes it imperative that it be developed. Development comes only at the cost of study. To learn about personality we must sit at the feet of science. Psychology says that we have traits, instincts, and impulses. Knowledge of strong points and weak points enables one to guide development. The development of personality demands that personality be cultivated. How shall this task be accomplished? It must begin by the individual developing himself. He must put intelligence to the task. He must work with the bracing faith that personality is self-perfectible. The common illustration of man as the organ and God as the organist was based on a denial of the self-perfectibility of personality. Humanism would offer a more adequate illustration. Life might be compared to a great orchestra. The various players in the orchestra need to develop their own talents, until they are capable of producing their maximum musical power. However, the symphony is not complete. The different players must co-operate. Each man



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must work with every other man. Good-will, singleness of purpose, and united action will be rewarded by perfection.

Such a goal is not to be achieved in a day or in a year. Future generations will be waging the same warfare for perfection which occupies us now. Humanity has a long way to go for "Man is not man as yet."<sup>31</sup> When we speak about man we are using relative terms. History has not yet produced the perfect, the real personality;<sup>32</sup> that still remains the goal.

2. Prayer and worship. A study of the history of religion reveals, to Potter, that prayer has always been thought of as indispensable to the religious life. Religion has taught that the surest way of receiving strength was through communion with God, the deity. What is the answer of humanism to the problems of prayer? The deity did not help the petitioner. Prayer does not have objective reference but subjective effect. Prayer is explained by psychology. Expression gives relief, by freeing the suppliant from his burdens and confusion. It has the same effect as talking aloud to an imaginary person. The meditation which is an essential part of prayer brings a clear vision of duty and a resolution to do our best. This is followed by a feeling of inward peace and unity. The theists make the mistake of giving God credit for this help. The humanists realize that it comes from the inward man. By our own determination we bring new life from our

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own personality. The prayer habit has been based on the assumption that man needed help other than that which his own personality could provide. This the humanists deny, realizing, however, that there are certain elements in subjective prayer which are valuable, meditation, aspiration, self-inventory and high resolve.<sup>33</sup>

Worship is the further development of prayer. The humanist regards the whole liturgy of worship as slave behavior. Worship tends to (1) afflict man with a slave complex and (2) make God a majestic and domineering ruler. This has dwarfed man's personality. The liturgy of worship has been built around the conception of sin held by Christian theism. Theism thought to emphasize God's majesty and mercy by branding man a sinful, vile creature. Humanism denies both these claims, thus rendering worship an unnecessary act. Some would suggest that we worship the not-yet-understood but the humanist would reply that it would be "too near the ignorance and superstition of the early theists."<sup>34</sup> Comte worshipped humanity but this was a mere compromise. Humanism discards the whole idea.

### 3. Conduct.

a. Right conduct as right action. Potter has already pointed out that man has "the power necessary to improve himself and the world."<sup>35</sup> The condition of progress

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thus becomes, according to Potter, a matter of education. A humanist thinks highly of Paul's words to Timothy, "Study to show thyself approved--".<sup>36</sup> Character is bought at the price of infinite effort. A study of our prevailing tendencies will reveal our course of action. Wrong tendencies must be eliminated, good ones strengthened. The right way although the hard way is the way of character.

Right conduct is right action. Right action depends on the development of the individual's innate capacities, abilities, and characteristics. The growth of personality is found to depend on self-development, the same is true of the establishment of right action.

b. The education of action. Potter says, "There is nothing more important in life than the training of desire."<sup>37</sup> Action is based on desire. Mistakes are made when uncontrolled desire holds sway. This spring of life<sup>38</sup> makes life rich or poor. The training of desire demands the practical application of some definite principles. Four may be named: (1) selection, (2) concentration, (3) contemplation, (4) action.<sup>39</sup> We are surrounded by many currents of thoughts and presented with many opportunities. A critical selection of ends is necessary. Having selected the goals toward which life is to

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<sup>36</sup>II Timothy 2:15.

<sup>37</sup>Potter, HR, 170.

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be directed, we must concentrate on them. Achievement costs effort and effort concentration. To reach our chosen goals necessitates the neglect of many goals. But more is needed. Concentration speaks of effort, contemplation of thought. Paul was a true prophet when he said, "Whatsoever things are good, whatsoever things are true,...think on these things."<sup>40</sup> Action is putting selection, concentration, and contemplation in service. The fruits of our thoughts are only valuable when they are shown to men by our action.

Humanism means action. To be a humanist is to be one who does things. Christianity asks us to believe the creed, humanism demands that we live it. Christianity tells us to believe certain things, humanism asks that we do them. Christianity emphasizes the subjective, humanism the objective. Christianity thinks in terms of the individual, humanism thinks in terms of society. Christianity lives for felicity in heaven, humanism works for Utopia on the earth.

Buddhism has its eight-fold path. Humanism is not so verbose, limiting itself to a four-fold way of life.<sup>41</sup> These ways of life are: (1) self-examination. The Psalmist prayed, "Search me, O Lord, and try my heart." The humanist prays, "Search me, O Ego, and try my soul." Self-appraisal is like standing before a magic mirror and obtaining a glance at your real inner self. It is like asking yourself some pertinent

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<sup>40</sup>Philippians 4:8.  
<sup>41</sup>Porter, pp. 21.

questions. "Am I a good citizen? Have I improved this last year?" Thus, while the theist bows his knee before his God, the humanist turns his gaze on the inward self. (2) Self-direction. Lack of direction halts progress. Achievement is possible only to those who have something to achieve. Life is not something of which to be afraid, but something which we must control and direct. Self-direction means that we become captain of our own bark. (3) Self-control is necessary if we are to keep our course. This does not mean repression but controlled expression. Man must dare to believe that he can control all things in his life and make them work together for good. (4) Self-giving is the social element in this controlled self-expression. Personality grows by giving. By giving ourselves to others we multiply our own resources.

The principle of self-giving should not be confused with the doctrine of vicarious suffering.<sup>42</sup> The theory of vicarious suffering is a child of theism and smacks of the blood of bull and goats. Self-giving is a more pregnant term; it speaks the language of society. "Humanism would find higher value in social service than in vicarious suffering."<sup>43</sup> Suffering and pain accomplish little or nothing for society. Giving our bodies to be burned is good theatricals but poor social service. Such suffering may serve as spiritual training for the individual soul, but it will hardly remove the cancers from

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the social body. However, it is not to be supposed that self-giving is entirely social in its aims.<sup>44</sup> In building a better society for others man makes a better environment for himself. Then he becomes popular by his action. Also he respects himself more. One of the main functions of self-expression has no social content. Self-expression means self-giving.<sup>45</sup> The author expresses himself in his book; the singer in his song; the composer in his compositions. It is true that society may benefit from these expressions, but the artist does not have his audience in mind, he is thinking only of his own development.

c. The individual and society. Thus far Potter has shown the way conduct may build character, which discussion has included little social emphasis. Humanism is not without standards of social conduct. How is the individual to act toward society? If all persons would accept the responsibility of developing their personality the problem would be solved. One answer is that the solution of the problem lies in the attitude which the individual develops. The other answer expresses the motto of humanism. In the words of the Golden Rule, "And treat men just as you wish them to treat you." (Luke 6:31--Goodspeed ed.)

Our selection of and concentration on a particular program must be in accordance with the best interest of our neighbor. The action of the individual must be governed in some ways by that of society. The selection of a goal, which

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although perfectly legitimate in itself, yet not in harmony with the best interest of mankind as a whole, is wrong. The individual's program of self-development should be in accord with the main goals of his fellow-beings.

The necessity of cooperation is not a handicap. It is a positive advantage. Self-development is possible only as we cooperate with others. Such high qualities as love come to us as a product of mutual self-development; for "Love is the product of the flowering of personalities and can only exist between them."<sup>46</sup> The development of the individual goes hand in hand with the development of society. The ultimate standard of conduct is a simple one. "That which improves human life is right, that which degrades human life is wrong; and that is all one needs to know."<sup>47</sup>

#### E. A Humanist's Attitude toward the Future.

1. Society. The unbounded faith which Potter has in man as an individual is evidenced also in his conception of the future society. Democracy is the best policy of government.<sup>48</sup> The modern despair of democracy is caused by lack of faith in man. Modern thinkers doubt man's competency to rule themselves or their willingness to sacrifice to do so. To a humanist such a social philosophy is rank heresy. It is sheer mockery to express faith in man as an individual, to extol

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 118.

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his power as a thinker and then accuse him of inability to build a new society. Man, who in the childhood of the races, created gods and devils at will and brought into existence great religious systems by the power of his emotion, is not to be discouraged in the task of creating a New World. Humanism has a will to believe in the coming society, because it has a remedy for present social ills. If a new society is to be builded on the earth, education,<sup>49</sup> economics,<sup>50</sup> politics,<sup>51</sup> and culture<sup>52</sup> must be humanized. To aid in such a task human-

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<sup>49</sup>Potter, HR, 32-50. Potter places the blame for the failure of modern education on the theistic method of indoctrination, which he contends has turned the people into pitifully standardized morons. (40) He reviews the history of education in America and finds that the sole purpose of education in early days was to train ministers. Today this is all changed, but the same method of teaching prevails. Potter insists that children be taught to think, not to repeat like parrots. Only in the realms of creative thought can great discoveries be made or noble purposes formed.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., 51-73. Economic forces, says Potter, must be controlled by men and not left to God (51). He finds some connection between capitalism and theism. Capitalism fails because it is competitive; communism, because it dwarfs personality. Potter has not stated his own theory of government but apparently he favors a middle course between the two mentioned above.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 74-88. Potter demands that politics be restored to its former purity. The presence of clean and capable men in the political arena will ultimately restore decency. If education trains men to think, and faith in themselves empowers them to act, politics can be reformed.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 89-105. Potter feels that the theistic and mechanistic should be removed. Music is self-expression. There is no distinction between sacred and profane for it is all human. Art and music are vital parts of a humanist's religion.



his power as a writer and thus become him at liberty to build a new society. Man, who is the child of the race, created gods and devils as will and brought into existence great religious systems by the power of his emotion, is not to be discouraged in the task of creating a new world. Humanism has a right to believe in the coming society, because it has a remedy for present social ills. If a new society is to be built on the earth, education, economics, politics, and culture must be humanized. To aim at such a task human-

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ism has a definite program of social reform.<sup>53</sup>

Former civilizations crumbled because of human slaves, but the new humanist Utopia will be builded upon steel slaves. Machines controlled by men are heralds of a new day. Thus, humanism faces the future with high hope, abundant courage, and undaunted faith, knowing that each man has the power in himself to create a perfect man and all men working together have the genius to build a perfect society.

One civilization, one culture, which shall be like the Golden Age of Athens once knew but which shall be built upon surer foundations. Man Power plus Machine Power makes Superhuman Power. Now that is my idea of heaven and that is what I think we ought to work toward.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Potter, HUM, 124-125. Humanism advocates the following reforms:

1. The cultivation of international and interracial amity.
2. The legalizing of birth control.
3. The improvement and extension of education.
4. The raising of cultural standards.
5. The correlation of cultural agencies.
6. The defence of freedom of speech.
7. The encouragement of art, music, drama, the dance, and all means of self-expression.
8. The elevation of the ethical standards of moving pictures.
9. The promotion of public health.
10. The checking of standardization in cases where it injures the individual.
11. The improvement of methods of dealing with criminals.
12. The improvement of means of communication.
13. The abolition of religious subsidies.
14. The improvement of industrial conditions.
15. The extension of social insurance.
16. The establishment of full sex equality.
17. The extension of child welfare measures.
18. The purification of politics.
19. The abolition of special privileges.
20. The conservation of natural resources for the people.
21. The substitution of temperance for prohibition.

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  10. The checking of standardization in cases where it injures the individual.
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  21. The substitution of temperance for prohibition.
- Porter, HUM, 186.

2. Purpose. Potter holds that since purpose implies personality, it is limited to man. The creative power in the universe, personal only in man himself, has no teleological function. To claim that the world is heading in any specific direction is pure imagination. The assignment of purpose to the cosmos is a reflection of primitive superstition. Humanism, however, does not deny that there is meaning in the world, because this is the primary postulate of all thought.<sup>55</sup> Nor does humanism deny the presence of power in the universe. Indeed, humanism believes that we only have fullness of life when we ally ourselves with this power and obtain some of its urge in our own lives.

The most we can say about purpose is that man and society have purpose, but the individual who looks to the cosmos to find it there, will gaze in vain. Our life, society, and the world have purpose only insofar as we assign it to them.

3. Immortality. Potter points out that the common theistic position regarding immortality contains two elements, (1) the idea of an ideal society in heaven; (2) the ideal of personal survival after death.<sup>56</sup> The first idea has been one of the most serious handicaps to an ideal society on earth.<sup>57</sup> Christians have substituted the singing of hymns about heaven

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., 104.

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for the task of building the earthly Paradise. The theological doctrine of the second coming of Christ has further stayed progress, because it led to the belief that the world was hopelessly evil. The second idea belongs to the infancy of the race. The most likely explanation of the origin of the idea of personal survival is the ghost theory.<sup>58</sup>

Humanism remains openminded on the question. It holds that the whole matter is one which science must investigate. So-called "revealed religion" or "wishful thinking" can have nothing of value to say about the problem.

Although humanists find it impossible to believe in these two fundamental elements in immortality, it sees no reason why this term should perish from the earth. There are substitutes, the first of which is "Faith in supreme value and self-perfectibility of human personality."<sup>59</sup> If we wish to think of immortality as a state, it is the state of self-perfected human personality.

Humanism is leading the way toward the discovery of the fourth stage in the evolutionary process, man's recognition

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<sup>58</sup>According to this theory when a man lived in a place where a friend, recently dead, had lived, it seemed to him that the spirit of his friend was still there. If this was true of his friend, he began to realize that it must be true of the friends of other people. Gradually the idea began to dawn on him that the ghosts of all the departed dead must be living still in the world. The thought of the dead as being alive led to the custom of putting food on the graves. Thus the theory of immortality became an integral part of religion. Potter, HUM, 107.

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of his potential personality. The second substitute for immortality is the biological survival in the life of the child. The third substitute is our influence on the life of the world.

If the quality of the life has been high, the quantity makes no difference. Does the individual wish life? Let him carve a place for himself in the life of the race. How? There are many ways. He might originate some plan for the good of humanity. This plan would be his claim to immortality. He might perform a noble deed which would enshrine him in the heart of humanity. But not all can be heroes of this kind. Their immortality must consist in their influence on their friends.

Their view of the universe is dramatic and even melodramatic. It is personal, spiritual.<sup>1</sup> When we read in the Bible that God created man in his own "image," we realize that it is the imagination of man expressing just the opposite. Man, having created a deity of majesty and power, immediately adopted a servile attitude toward him. Having created God as the object of his worship, man also made God the seat of his authority.

The growth of the idea of the kingship of God can be seen in the theology of Paul, Augustine, and Calvin. Paul thought of God as an Oriental despot, making arbitrary laws and issuing despotic fiat. This God of the past was not

<sup>1</sup> Sellars, NBE, 31; see also Sellars, RCh, 143.



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### CHAPTER III

#### THE HUMANISM OF ROY WOOD SELLARS

##### A. The Problem of God.

1. The God of the Past. To move from a delineation of Potter's philosophy to that of Sellars' is like plunging into a flooded river after fording a shallow stream, albeit the former be clear and the latter muddy. Sellars takes a critical attitude toward the old interpretation of cosmic forces. Primitive man has always endeavored to answer his questions about the creative energy in terms of being like himself. "Their view of the universe is dramatic and even melodramatic, it is personal, mystical."<sup>1</sup> When we read in the Bible that God created man in his own "image," we realize that it is the imagination of man expressing just the opposite. Man, having created a deity of majesty and power, immediately adopted a servile attitude toward him. Having created God as the object of his worship, man also made God the seat of his authority.

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under the control of law but was a law unto himself. Supernaturalism tends to remove God from the haunts of men and place him above in a world by himself. The God who sent one man to Heaven and another man to Hell because of such a trivial reason as belief or unbelief in a certain creed is unworthy of any worship. The next step in religion will come only when man gives up the God of the past.

2. Has Man a Cosmic Companion? The question, "Is there a God?" must be answered in the light of present day research. Theism is rather hazy in its definitions of God. The popular theory among the laity is that God is an anthropomorphic being, while current theology defines deity in more intellectual terms. Popular theism is the product of the unreflective mind, while theological theism is the joint opinion of speculative thinking in the realm of theology. The former type of thought cannot add or subtract from the argument. The theologian bases his argument on the assumption that the universe is not self-sufficient: that it depends for its continued existence on some force external to it which is conceived as being personal. Theism has always been tottering between deism and pantheism.

There are three arguments for the existence of God; the ontological, the cosmological, and the teleological. The first argument, developed by Anselm, holds that God is that which nothing greater can be conceived. Now this cannot mean greater in time and space. "And if it does not mean greater in



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value, the difficulty remains that we have no right to assert that our ideal exists."<sup>2</sup> It cannot be argued that existence is given in the idea of God because Kant showed that existence is not a predicate like a predicate describing shape, size, color. The thinker, then, must abandon these two ideas. The conclusion must be that when we think objectively, we do not think about God, but about the physical, natural universe.

The cosmological argument for God breaks down when there is no necessity for a First Cause. The theistic creeds which express finality were products of pre-evolutionary days. Now all is changed. Evolutionary naturalism does not demand finality. When did the real begin to be real? The answer is, it always was real. When did God create the world or when was the world created? The answer is, the world was not created, it always has been.<sup>3</sup> It is true that things in nature change but this is mere organization and not creation. Evolution and devolution, advance and regress. These are in the world and of the world. Evolutionary naturalism destroys the whole cosmological argument for the existence of God.

The third argument is the teleological argument. The theists say there is purpose in the world and this signifies a purposer. This cannot be proved and as Naturalism shows, science tends to disprove it.<sup>4</sup> Has man a cosmic companion? The answer must be in the negative.

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<sup>2</sup>Sellars, RCA, 211.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 212.

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3. The Old Revelation. Theism, Sellars thinks, has always to some degree rested its belief in the Bible as the inspired and true word. Modern biblical criticism has severely undermined such naive faith. The story of the Hebrews and their relations with Yahweh is nothing but mythology. The church has for long defended the belief that Christ was the founder of Christianity and its sole creator. Paul, Augustine, and Luther are but interpreters, says the church. But the truth is that Christianity is the creation of many minds, the "flowering forth of religious mythology."<sup>5</sup> The New Testament, a collection of myths and not written by eye-witnesses as supposed,<sup>6</sup> cannot be a true guide to the highest religion. The scientific mind cannot acknowledge miracles. It is very easy for the theists to say that God performs miracles but experience fails to substantiate such an assertion.

The historic approach to religion or to Christianity is the most fruitful one. It is a paradox that the less a person knows about his faith, the more firmly he holds to it. The philosopher cannot accept a faith which is nurtured by ignorance, but must put his trust in experimental reason. Tradition is not truth. The old revelation is contained in the Bible. Christians have come to believe that faith in the Bible and faith in their religion are synonymous phrases. A

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Bellevue, Wash. 80.  
April, 1903.

humanist must regard this belief as both unreasonable and vicious, because it means that we substitute feeling, emotions, and theories for universal experience.

Outside the story of the gospels, the most important part of the Bible is the epistles of Paul. This man was the real founder of "both liturgical and theological Christianity."<sup>7</sup> Paul lived in an age marked by religious unrest when many religions found their way into the Roman Empire. As a student of his day, Paul undoubtedly absorbed a great deal of the pagan thought. When the scholar understands the background of Paul's religion he is unlikely to have that naive faith in the apostle to the Gentiles which is characteristic of the uncritical mind.

He (Paul) was probably an enthusiast with the tendency exalted moods peculiar to epileptics and yet with high mental ability.-----We can comprehend the work of Paul, one of the main founders of Christianity, only when we see him as a mystical interpretator weaving the Jewish traditions of the soberer type, the apocalyptic outlook of such books as Daniel and Ezra, the mystery cult of the Hellenistic world, and the Stoic philosophy into one whole, dominantly supernaturalistic.<sup>8</sup>

The result of this combination was an other-worldly mysticism and a theological doctrine of sin and salvation. That Paul was one of the independent founders of Christianity is further evidenced by the fact that with the exception of the crucifixion, the life and saying of Jesus are entirely neglected by Paul.<sup>9</sup>

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The old revelation was a supernatural one. It confined itself to one phase of experience. The Renaissance heralded the doom of theology. When science entered the arena to battle for the truth, as it had been discovered by patient investigation and repeated experiment, theology was put to flight. With the introduction of extensive research, the Bible was found to contain a multitude of contradictions and discrepancies. Thus the two high priests of supernaturalism, the Bible, which contains the facts (supposedly), and theology, an interpretation of the facts, have both been done to death by reason. The Bible is a book of its time, for although ethically noble in places, it can solve none of our problems in this age.<sup>10</sup> Supernaturalism itself, which besides being supported by the Bible, has fostered a belief in the Bible, is only a common way of escape from reality. The thinker realizes that it is a sedative and not a remedy.<sup>11</sup> The old revelation is indeed old and needs to be supplanted by a better guide.

#### 4. Jesus.<sup>12</sup> Sellars first calls attention to the

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<sup>9</sup>To prove this point Sellars quotes a sentence, the source of which I have been unable to trace: "Aside from the crucifixion not a single fact in the life of Jesus can be gleaned from these epistles, nor do they record a single saying of Jesus." (NSR, 107). This is a very sweeping statement. Reference will be made to it in the chapter on criticism.

<sup>10</sup>Sellars, RCA, 50.

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fact that there is at present a tendency to exalt the human Jesus over the theological figure which Paul and Augustine created. This is a striking illustration of the way the church is influenced by popular opinion. The simple gospel story of Jesus is a noble piece of literature, "a masterpiece of lyricized mythology."<sup>13</sup> The man of common sense has come to accept it as such and takes an aesthetic attitude toward it.

It is not strange, considering the length of time since Jesus' death and the absence of original document, that there have been so many myths regarding his life. The gospel writers depended on oral tradition, a very unhistorical source. Matthew is contradictory. Mark is the work of some unknown man, at some unknown date. Luke was not written by the physician, but compiled by some Jew long after the fall of Jerusalem. It appears then that the last sources of information regarding Jesus were neither written by eye-witnesses nor by men who lived in that generation.

The story of the virgin-birth is a product of Hellenistic beliefs. It was not strange to hear about such a thing happening in those days. Plato was supposed to have been the son of a virgin. The true story is that Jesus was the son of a carpenter, only one of a large family. It is tragic that the church refuses to recognize this truth and disgraces itself by excommunicating ministers who are sincere enough to tell the real story.

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The record of Jesus' early life is brief. What little there is leads to the conclusion that he grew up to be a silent, reflective man, with the outlook, the standards, and the beliefs of his day. As a youth he was dissatisfied and restless; an outspoken critic of the glaring injustices of his day. He shared in the expectation of the coming Messiah and in common with the people dreamed of the establishment of a supernatural kingdom.

After hearing John's speech at the Jordan he felt the call to preach. His message was that the kingdom of God was near and that men should be ready for it. Like all prophets he became a healer, accepting the common superstition about evil spirits. As time went on his audiences increased. His sympathy with the common people led him to oppose the prevalent religion. This disregard of the ecclesiastical law led to an open clash with the religious leaders, which soon caused his arrest. Surrounded by his enemies he saw his hopes shattered and gave himself up to the authorities. His firm hope that his God would save him proved a vain one. On the cross he finally realized that there was no deity to aid him. "The heavens were dumb as they always have been and always will be."<sup>14</sup> Tradition has it that Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, but in all probability he was thrown into the common pit, the burial place of malefactors. The stories of his resurrection are purely mythical.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 82.



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The committee has also been very helpful in its work.

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He never thought of himself as the Messiah or as the son of God, but after his supposed resurrection, when his disciples formed a church, this became one of the chief tenets of their belief. Another was the belief in the early return of the Messiah. The history of the church through the ages is the story of its struggle to guard these traditions and to force them on unbelievers. Thus, the Christianity of the early church, which has been the basis of all creeds, can no longer serve as an adequate religion for the new generation.

#### B. The Problem of Man.

1. Origin. The problem of the origin of man is discussed by Sellars from the standpoint of evolutionary naturalism. The evolutionary naturalist realizes that life has always seemed to demand a creator. It has been difficult to understand how the living came from the non-living. In the past, life was thought of as some divine entity, deposited by God in the human breast, which enabled the individual to live. But life means the behavior of the organism. How does life arise in the organism? The theist's answer is that it was the special creation of the divine will, which involves the intervention of an outside power in the evolutionary process. The whole view is untenable because it is unscientific.<sup>15</sup> If we eliminate Kelvin's theory of the cosmic transportation of germs, there remains the theory of evolutionary naturalism.

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<sup>15</sup>Sellars, PPR, 282.



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According to the theory of evolutionary naturalism, life may arise in a natural way through the working of light and heat upon certain chemical elements on and in the earth.<sup>16</sup> Matter once thought of as particles of substance is now conceived to be dynamic and organized. Organization is the key to the whole problem. Evolution proceeds by a series of steps, which are nothing more than new types of organization. Each new organization more complex than the last exhibits new properties. Life does not spring full grown from non-life, nor does the organic shoot full formed from the inorganic. It is an infinitely slow step-by-step process from the lowest inorganic to the highest organic.

Behind this life, then, there is no spirit, but matter. Material being was potentially alive because out of it emerged life, mind, and consciousness with novel organization.<sup>17</sup> Although it is not possible to trace this slow process, or to identify each stage, this explanation is fair to our present knowledge of physics and chemistry.

This emergent evolution eliminates the old barriers between domains in nature and makes all events, both causes and results, a part of the one great evolutionary process. For this reason man is natural to the earth. He is a "child of nature"<sup>18</sup> and has no connection with any cosmic creator.<sup>19</sup> If

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<sup>16</sup>Sellars, RCA, 174.

<sup>17</sup>Sellars, PPR, 295.

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Behind this life, then, there is no spirit, but matter.  
Matter itself was potentially alive because out of it emerged  
life, mind, and consciousness with novel organization.<sup>17</sup>  
Although it is not possible to trace this slow process, or to  
identify each stage, this explanation is fair to our present  
knowledge of physics and chemistry.  
This emergent evolution eliminates the old barriers  
between domains in nature and makes all events, both causes  
and results, a part of the one great evolutionary process. For  
this reason man is natural to the earth. He is a "child of  
nature" and has no connection with any cosmic creator.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Sellars, RGA, 194.  
<sup>17</sup> Sellars, RPR, 235.  
<sup>18</sup> Sellars, RPR, 475; RGA, 147, 158.

we have any cosmic father it is the sun, which so energized our mother earth that she conceived and brought forth her child--humanity. This explanation of man's origin steers a middle course between old-fashioned naturalism and traditional idealism, avoiding the excesses of both, while finding a place for all life, the lowest and the highest, and all experience, the smallest and the greatest.

2. Human Personality. The conception of man as the child of nature, Sellars claims, is the key which unlocks the door to personality. Human personality<sup>20</sup> is now thought of as a complex growth. We are what we are by the lives of our ancestors. And not only our ancestors, but the race. Culture and civilization have formed, molded, and enlarged personality until now it is the dominating factor in life. It is the quality which separates us from the animals. Biological evolution and social heritage makes a Milton, a Garibaldi, a Lincoln.

This new conception gives personality a larger place in the universe. Before personality was only significant as a tool in the hands of the Almighty. But man is more than a creature, he is a creator, with his destiny in his own hands. This does not imply that man is an object of worship. The entire idea of worship must be replaced by "loyalty to those efforts and values which elevate human beings and gives a quality of nobility and significance to human life here and

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<sup>20</sup>For Sellars "human personality" and "personality" are synonymous terms.



we have any cosmic father it is the sun, which as energized our mother earth that she conceived and brought forth her child-humanity. This explanation of man's origin steers a middle course between old-fashioned naturalism and traditional idealism, avoiding the excesses of both, while finding a place for all life, the lowest and the highest, and all experience, the smallest and the greatest.

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<sup>30</sup>For Seligman's "human personality" and "personality" are synonymous terms.

now."<sup>21</sup>

Man's place in nature assumes greater proportions when we understand the power of personality to set new standards and build new ideals. It "creates, sublimates, revalues."<sup>22</sup> In other days man used this power to create his heavens and hells and to people them with spirits good and bad. Now released from superstition he may set his mind to more worthwhile tasks. The first principle and the most important law of personality is spiritual courage.<sup>23</sup> This the soul must possess if the finer sensibilities of life are not to be blunted. The possession of it shows personality at its best, great enough to love worthy causes, daring enough to fight for them, courageous enough to die for them. It will enable us to face the facts of life, realizing there is no cosmic succor, and empowering us to overcome.

### 3. Human values.

a. Definition of value. Values for Sellars are concerned with the whole of life. They have long been thought of as some particular part of man's life, placed on him by an outside power and to be accepted as one accepts medicine. Value is man's total response to the situations, circumstances, and forces of his environment. "It is an aspect of human feeling and doing as guided by practical knowing."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Sellars, NSR, 7.

<sup>22</sup>Sellars, EN, 342.

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<sup>22</sup> Bellamy, *WBR*, V.

<sup>23</sup> Bellamy, *WBR*, 343.

<sup>24</sup> Bellamy, *WBR*, 3.

Our valuation of an object is our estimation of it. Environment includes both circumstances and people. Thus although values are "conditioned objectively by the nature of their objects, they are yet primarily personal and social, that is human."<sup>25</sup> This means that values are egocentric and sociocentric. That values are human and divorced from any eternal or transcendent standards or objects is one of the main emphases of humanism.<sup>26</sup>

Values then are not something given to us but something we give to objects. They are the projection of man's desires and interests upon things. In valuing we are on the inside of reality.<sup>27</sup> Man is an agent adjusting himself to his surroundings and value becomes a term by which he estimates those things connected with his life.

b. Religion and values. Having established a working definition of values, Sellars proceeds to show their connection with various aspects of life. Since values are reactions to environment, they must include the religious instinct, or impulse. In primitive times religion was essentially belief in powerful beings whose aid was needed if the health and prosperity of the tribe were to be maintained. Religion was in this way a normal part of the social life, the religious

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<sup>24</sup>Sellars, RCA, 14.

<sup>25</sup>Sellars, EN, 342.

<sup>26</sup>Sellars, RCA, 143.

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Our valuation of an object is our estimation of its environment. It includes both circumstances and people. Thus although values are "conditioned objectively by the nature of their objects," they are yet primarily personal and social, that is human.<sup>25</sup> This means that values are ego-centric and socio-centric. That values are human and divorced from any eternal or transcendent standards or objects is one of the main emphases of

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rites were to conserve values. The primitive man for the sake of establishing and conserving values became a faithful devotee of his gods. Values have changed since. Man has learned to revalue his values.<sup>28</sup> Standards have been raised. The revaluing of values was an important step in the growth of religion.<sup>29</sup> Despite these changes, however, religion is still "loyalty to the values of life."<sup>30</sup> It is the life of the individual expressed in terms of reaction to problems.

Such conceptions as the above force men to think of the spiritual as referring to the whole realm of human endeavor. Terms must be redefined. The spiritual must be naturalized. This involves a double process; a redefinition of the term spiritual and the enlargement of the term natural, so that it includes the whole of experience.<sup>31</sup>

The old Darwinian evolution erred in stressing the biological heritage and overlooking the social. The child is what he is not only because of biological evolution but also as a result of social environment. The new naturalism does justice to the facts when it speaks of the spiritual life as a product of the ages. The spiritual is but a term for human activities concerned with the good, the true, and the

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<sup>28</sup>Sellars, RCA, 247; EN, 342.

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<sup>30</sup>Sellars, NSR, 7; RCA, 3.

<sup>31</sup>Sellars, RCA, 238.



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<sup>30</sup>Sellars, MSR, 7; RCA, 8.

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beautiful.<sup>32</sup> It is a natural human function, therefore it is absurd to set the spiritual over against the physical as something entirely different. The only way to contrast the two is to compare the man and the animal or the man and the fish. Spirituality is common to all the higher levels of intelligence. Theism is fond of making a distinction within the spiritual. The soul is regarded as good, the body as evil. This denies that human experience is a whole. Christianity has flirted with the spiritual-physical theology so long that humanism despairs. It is necessary that values be revalued first. Christianity is unfit and unable to perform the changes involved.<sup>33</sup> Society will continue to stumble along unless it adopts a new religion--socialism.<sup>34</sup> This new religion would be concerned with human relationships rather than theological creeds.

The naturalizing of the spiritual leads to the naturalizing of religion. Real religion, which is man's battle to conserve his values,<sup>35</sup> is natural religion. A humanist denies that religion is inseparable from over-beliefs or supernatural sanctions. This means that Christianity must go, but this is

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 244.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 247.

<sup>34</sup>Loc. Cit. Sellars expounds his theory of government and society in his book, NSD. The use of the term above is confusing because he seems to make it synonymous with the term humanism.

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35 Religion as "the conservation of the highest values" is known as the King-Lewis theory.

for the best because it has already been shown that it is inadequate. Man, because he is man, is religious. Man has always been religious and as the stream of life flows on he will be more so, for the stream will deposit more dreams, more aspirations and larger experiences in his soul. Religion will be richer because the race will have lived longer.

3. Morals and values. Sellars points out that since man's spiritual life is an organic whole, religion and morality are closely related. When man created a certain type of god, he had a certain type of morals. For morality, like science and art, are man's special creation and distinct possession.<sup>36</sup> In primitive society the individual's social relationships includes the superhuman agencies as well as his neighbors. The individual needed the approval of the god as well as that of his social group. Religion in this way came to have a double sanction, the sanction of the supernatural and the approbation of civil law. There was also a double content in the moral code as illustrated by the ten commandments of the Hebrews. The first four concerned man's relation to his god, the last six his conduct toward his fellow-men. As time went on the emphasis came to be placed on the first, which led to the development of ritualism.

The double sanction and content of morality illustrates how closely connected were the tribal and supernatural standards. Christianity has always held that group morality was

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<sup>36</sup>Sellars, NSR, 222.



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dards. Christianity has always held that group morality was

the result of supernatural standards. But conscience is the "reproduction of group morality"<sup>37</sup> and group morality is the product of custom. The social creed as evolved by the tribe was projected into the heavens whence it returned from Mt. Sinai or Olympia as the commands of the gods. As time went on new standards of morality became fashionable. This was not because of any revelation but due to the growth of human culture. Moral progress always consists in the increase in knowledge of the social fabrics and a development in the manner of human living.<sup>38</sup> The growth in morality was so rapid that man "grew faster ethically than he did intellectually."<sup>39</sup>

Popular ethics has ever taken the form of hedonism. Be good and you'll be happy was the advice of Job's comforters, the songs of the psalmist, and the creed of the church. It has become the plea of the modern minister. Once happiness was thought to be the reward of the righteous man while on earth. Experience proved this to be false. Christianity was saved however by the doctrine of the future life. Rewards were supposed to be given "over yonder". As this theory was beyond the reach of the empirical test, it was safe from denial. This removal of the tribunal to the next world was a denial that morality has its sanctions in our lives here and now. This in turn was a denial that morality was natural to

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<sup>37</sup>Sellars, RCA, 256.

<sup>38</sup>Sellars, PPR, 426, 427. NSR, 172.

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humanity. But moral action is natural action for the kind of creature man is.<sup>40</sup> People are not good because they have to be but because they are rational beings. Morality is not what we put on but what we give out. It is not repression but expression. Any interpretation of morality as a creed given by supernatural authority makes the good life negative. It says that a man's life consisteth in the abundance of things he does not do. This is another proof of the inadequacy of Christianity.<sup>41</sup>

This interpretation of morality leads to pessimism because it implies that morality is not a quality which pays for itself. To say that righteousness ends in failure on the earth is to cast doubt upon the standard of morality. We are responsible for the conditions in the world and if prevailing conditions make our lives tragic we have our own lack of wisdom and intelligence to blame. And if self-sacrifice is necessary that is all part of life and therefore is moral. The theists think that God is needed as a judge if people are to be good, but this again denies that morality is natural to man. At present morals are in an experimental and exploratory stage of development.<sup>42</sup> There will be a new code in the future, not given as final authority from heaven but the production of the group thought and experience.

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<sup>40</sup>Sellars, PPR, 458.

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The question will now arise, Is not our present moral status the direct contribution of the Christian moral code? The unenlightened mind may answer in the affirmative, but investigation has shown that Christianity has had little to do with moral progress. The moral code is a wide river fed by many streams, of which Christianity is but one of the least. The Greeks left a great tradition, the Romans exerted an influence and science has played its part. Frequently the church has been a block in the way of moral progress.<sup>43</sup> The church defended slavery, bishops held serfs, and ecclesiastical councils repressed intellectual advance. Nietzsche exaggerated when he called Christianity a slave-religion, but nevertheless it is not a world morality. It is the religion of a small group who believe that they must be saved from sin, but are not concerned with the affairs of the world.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis on personal salvation blinds the eyes to world needs. Even today if the support of science were taken away, the modern Christian would not rise above the moral standards of his ancestors.

I am not convinced that the religious sanction was of much advantage in the evolution of morality....The presence of religious sanctions simply beclouds the real factors at work.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Sellars, RCA, 263, 272.

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The inadequacy of traditional morality is clearly seen in its conception of sin. Sin was conceived of as something so terrible that it must be punished by an avenging God. The sinner was shown the great gulf between his imperfection and God's perfection. Christianity then saved the day by bridging the gulf by God's saving grace. The flaws in such a conception are so numerous as to be fatal. It is poor psychology to set so high a standard and is literal falsehood to tell about the awfulness of sin.<sup>46</sup> Goodness is a relative term and standards are changing. It is true that we fall short of our duty at times but this is to be expected, because we are still in the process of evolution. Such failures are to be regretted, and endeavors should be made to form new habits, but to talk about the horribleness of sin is gross exaggeration.

This wholesale abandonment of the Christian tradition will raise the further question, What has humanism to offer? Humanism will seek to put morality on a secular basis. There are two types of morality, the conventional, which is external, authoritative, and traditional, and the reflective which is internal, self-imposed, and experimental. Christian ethics belongs to the first class, humanistic ethics to the second class. The latter is clearly an advance over the former. It has a wider range of experience and knowledge and stands prepared to make a change in attitude when it is necessary. The only defence traditional religion had for its code was "Be-

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cause it is right," which leaves the question how and why they were right still unsettled.

The new morality is experimental humanism.<sup>47</sup> It learns from human psychology and ethical experience and steers a middle course between utilitarianism and Kantianism. It holds that morality is relative to time and place. "It asserts that the basic thing in ethics is human good and that human good is the satisfaction of human interests."<sup>48</sup> The spiritual life itself is an integration of interests. These interests seek to express themselves as specific desires which are judged according to the ethical standard. These activities of the spiritual life may be called values. The judgment of morality is the judgment of values. It must be remembered that personality<sup>49</sup> is influenced and transformed by social environment. Duty in such a system becomes moral choice. The desires are guided by the principle of harmony in the personality. This guiding principle would be the lastingness of the satisfaction which any choice would furnish it.

4. Immortality. The existence of God and the fact of immortality, Sellars recognizes as the fundamental tenets of religion throughout the ages. Immortality has been such

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<sup>47</sup>Sellars, RCA, 270.

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an essential element of modern religious faith that the common man thinks religion cannot exist without this hope. Humanism which believes that religion consists in man's reaction to the real facts of life, refuses to accept this common belief.

It is not true that religion has been always supported by the hope of eternal life. Judaism was for centuries a religion for which there was no future life. The early Greeks thought of death as final. Present day belief in immortality is a heritage from later Judaism, from which the Christian church received its doctrinal life. When the Jews were repeatedly defeated by invaders and finally taken into captivity, there arose the compensatory doctrine of some future life where the Jews should inherit rewards for their earthly sufferings. This led to the rise of dualism, the theory that the body was distinct from the soul. In early Christian theology as formulated by Paul the body was regarded as the temple of the soul. The latter was thought of as being able to survive after the death of the body. Christianity arose at a time when pessimism was rampant and even the ablest of men fled from life. To such an age the doctrine of a future, happy life came as a way of escape from the pressing problems of this life.

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lem.<sup>50</sup> The early philosophers, two of whom were Democritus and Epicurus, thought of the soul as being a delicate material substance. Plato and Aristotle were the first to put forth the idea that the soul of man was immortal. This theory held sway until the days of Hume. However, idealism has been orthodox doctrine until lately and its theory of reality as spirit and spirit as mind supported immortality.<sup>51</sup> These are the reasons for the survival and growth of immortality.

The return of realism with the new naturalism is a death blow to immortality. The new theory of knowledge is opposed to it. Personality is the product of a long natural evolution. Its complex nature is the result of biology, of education and culture. The mind or soul is a term for activities expressed as interests and relationships. Dualism is now replaced by a functional view of life which sees the personality as one with the organism as a whole.<sup>52</sup>

Aside from any connection with immortality there is a new idea of the human spirit. The soul does not exist independently but depends on the senses for its growth and survival. Abnormal psychology has shown that insanity is not due to the work of a demon but to the functional disorder of the brain. The soul and consciousness are therefore very closely

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<sup>50</sup> Sellars, NSR, 148; RCA, 180, 183.

<sup>51</sup> Sellars, RCA, 190.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 191-192.



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<sup>50</sup> Sellers, *HR*, 148; *BGA*, 180, 183.

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connected. The soul is another name for culture.<sup>53</sup> Nature and nurture are the elements which create, mold, and build the soul.

Why are mind and body assigned to the organism? Since we know the brain from the outside and are at the same time one with it, we have a double theory of knowledge. Consciousness is an intrinsic part of the living organism, a continued flow of events.<sup>54</sup>

The trend of modern science and philosophy being toward naturalism, humanism accepts mortality. Despite the dread of annihilation the individual must grow old unafraid and meet death cheerfully realizing that "death is the price we pay for life."<sup>55</sup> To the objection that humanism does away with persistence of personality, humanism replies that this question assumes an idea of the soul which is incorrect. Humanism holds that the living soul is a thoroughly temporal thing. Being temporal it is subject to the laws of change and decay. The persistence of personality implies that the soul grows greater and greater. However the opposite is true. With age the soul loses its vitality and becomes set in certain grooves.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 194.

<sup>54</sup>In an interesting article, ICP, Sellars endeavors to state his beliefs about consciousness. He hesitates to admit that he is a crass materialist, evading the issue by saying that "consciousness is physical and extended but not in the spatial part of the brain." (694) He concludes that mind itself is a physical system which has evolved to a higher level.

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55 Bell's, 195, 148.

In this respect there is no difference between the soul and the body. The soul finds itself unable to rise into the realm of abiding values. It is well that death comes to remove the soul and body from the arena of life.

The only true immortality comes in the identification of the personality with some great cause. The survival of the cause means the survival of the creative personality.

### C. The Problem of the World.

1. Creation. Sellars believes the Hebrew account of creation to be pure mythology. "The gist of the matter is that early man socialized and anthropomorphized his world."<sup>57</sup> The theory that the world had a beginning has been badly shaken by evolution. Humanism accepts the world as such and does not ask useless questions about the origin for it always was.<sup>58</sup> To say that it came into existence at such and such a time is misleading because time is merely a word describing the changes which go on in this world. It is impossible to think of origins or endings in terms of finality. The world is something which has ever been present and ever been changing and it will continue to change in the future.

There are objections to this view. How can we think of nature as always having been? This is answered by another question. How can the theist think of God as always having been?<sup>59</sup> The further objection of how can the living come from

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<sup>57</sup>Sellars, PPP, 477.

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the not-living has already been answered.<sup>60</sup>

2. Teleology. Purpose versus blind chance, Sellars sees as the traditional dilemma. But there is no chance. There is causality but no chance. Naturalism holds that ultimately the idea of purpose will be discarded and causality assume its rightful place. The traditional dilemma belongs to the day of mechanism. Science now speaks of the atoms as selective. Due to these selective qualities atoms form combinations not from blind chance but by inherited organization. This particular quality which is the property of atoms shows that order is intrinsic to nature however far down we go."<sup>61</sup> All this is from within. It is organic selection not external control.

The question of design in nature is to be thought of in this same manner. That there is design in nature is evident. That design is due to any cosmic designer is not evident. The whole idea of design can be replaced by growth based on internal organization.

The above does not imply that design and purpose are not in the world. As organization emerges and becomes more complex, novel forms of life appear. One result of this increased thickness of growth is the birth of purpose in man. The individual is conscious of a set of the whole organism. He is also aware of means by which he will attain his goal.

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<sup>60</sup>Supra, 43.

<sup>61</sup>Sellars, RCA, 218.







Thus particular acts which man consciously does are part of a coordinated plan. Theism on the basis of this truth has assumed that there was a plan for the universe. The cosmic process became purposeful and external, things were filled into a pre-arranged plan. A humanist being a naturalist is skeptical of any such philosophy. "There is no central brood-Will which has planned it."<sup>62</sup>

Now that the theory of evolution has replaced that of creation the theist holds that a world-purpose lies behind and governs. But this conclusion is the result of deductive and not inductive thinking. Naturalism contends that change is of the manner of diversity and reorganization within the structure of nature rather than the manner of a plan.<sup>63</sup> It is true that at the level of human intelligence there is conscious planning, but this is purpose in a part of the whole and not in the whole itself. To sum up. Order in nature is the result of growth and adjustment and not design.<sup>64</sup>

A humanist does not, however, deny that life has intrinsic meaning. While life is not related to any cosmic purpose, it is still related to the pursuit of common interests. This is what gives life meaning. Friends, ambitions, hopes, these charge life with significance. It is not necessary that man feel himself to be a part of any cosmic plan. It is

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<sup>62</sup>Sellars, EN, 343.

<sup>63</sup>Sellars, RCA, 225.

<sup>64</sup>Sellars, PPP, 480.



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enough that he lose himself in the stream of life.

Life is no planned play but an amateurish affair in which the actors must work independently.<sup>65</sup> But there are flashes of wit and humor and at times the ripple of laughter to balance the pain and tears. This is the only intelligent, empirical view of the cosmos.

3. Evil. According to Sellars the logical answer of theism to the problem of evil is to say that God created both the good and the evil. Its only alternative is mythological dualism which credits Satan with being the arch enemy of God and the source of evil. Faced with this dilemma, theism has only one way of escape. Mysticism which teaches that evil is an illusion is the only other answer to the problem. None of these answers square with the facts of experience.

Humanism turns to science for an answer to this problem. Man is a part of nature and as a part of nature he must contend against other parts of nature. He is an organism which continues to exist because he does battle with nature. Storms smite, cyclones come, earthquakes destroy and because of them man suffers. When faced with a situation in nature and unable to control it, Man, like the beast, perishes. "Physical evil is evil only because it hurts man, who does not want to be hurt."<sup>66</sup> Good and evil considered from an objective standpoint do not

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differ from one another. Evil is as an intrinsic and necessary part of human life as good.<sup>67</sup> Both are causal events, but assume different aspects according to the meaning which we give to them. In themselves they are purely neutral.

This new outlook simplifies the problem of evil. A humanist sees the main problem of as that of conquering nature and controlling its course.<sup>68</sup> The instruments of control are in man's hands. Science provides the necessary equipment. Medicine enables him to conquer diseases, sociology gives him power to change social conditions, engineering helps him to coerce nature. Man no longer battles against "the prince of this world" or any other such shadowy figure, but he wars against nature in her wild and destructive moods.

Science however cannot eliminate the evil in human nature. Jealousy, hatred, poverty, and murder will remain. Hearts will continue to be broken, spirits again will be crushed. But this is to be expected. Man and the acts of nature are part of one great system which is neither friendly nor concerned with man. If man become pessimistic let him realize that there are many who are happy and multitudes who are free. Nature is both harsh and happy. Life is like that.

4. Naturalism. Although in the preceding pages of this thesis the term "naturalism" has been frequently used and different phases of Sellars' presentation of

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<sup>67</sup>Sellars, RCA, 154.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid., 151.



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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 135.

the theory explained, it might be well in summing up Sellar's philosophy of religion briefly to define naturalism. It is on this theory that Sellars bases his religious beliefs.

Naturalism is essentially scientific. Evolutionary naturalism holds that nature is an inclusive space-time system and "that everything which exists and acts in it is a part of this system."<sup>69</sup> The world must be explained in terms of physical objects which can be studied in accordance with scientific method. Things which exist cannot be explained by superhuman agencies. They must be explained by other physical objects in time and space. That which is unlocalized cannot be studied scientifically, therefore it cannot be real. This frank admission that all is physical eliminates all dualism. Life and mind are both physical, thus able to be located in time and space.<sup>70</sup> Consciousness itself becomes an observable phenomenon because it is physical and extended.<sup>71</sup> Physical extension becomes a characteristic of reality, for "that which is physical is real and that which is real is physical."<sup>72</sup>

This is a common sense view of the world. It takes into account all that can be known about nature, and nature is the sole object of man's knowledge. When man surveys his environment he gazes upon flowers and trees, men and birds. All are a

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<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 141.

<sup>70</sup>Sellars, PPR, 1, 3; PPP, 342.

<sup>71</sup>Sellars, ICP, 694.

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part of nature. A study of the general structure and an analysis of the texture proves that "the real is formed matter."<sup>73</sup> It is not possible to have a sensuous experience of a soul force, or God or spirit. To say that spirit is real is wishful thinking. To claim that the world is essentially spirit is to day-dream. Naturalism bases its philosophy on things as they are, not on what they should be, or what we would like them to be. The world is an impersonal, valueless, and physical system, blind to man's need, deaf to his cry for help.

Does naturalism then conclude that man is an inanimate lump of clay? It has already been shown that organization is intrinsic to nature. There is difference as well as change in the natural system. To say that all is physical is not saying that a man is the same as a chair. Nature is heterogenous and allows for man as the source and creator of values. Naturalism does not deny man's personality, it magnifies it. This new naturalism is able to do justice to the immensity and impersonality of a valueless universe and yet recognize the richness and capacity of human personality.

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<sup>73</sup>Sellars, ECR, (Drake,) etc.), 218.



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## CHAPTER IV

### COMPARISON OF POTTER AND SELLARS

#### A. The Nature of God.

It is rather difficult to compare the philosophy of two men who move in such different realms of thought as do Potter and Sellars. Potter speaks the language of a popular lecturer. His words and ideas are those of the man in the street. Sellars conveys his thought in the language of a philosopher. Despite the difference in arguments and language, however, it is not difficult to determine the fact that the same spirit is evident in both Potter and Sellars.

The first prominent point of agreement in their philosophy of religion is that God is unnecessary. Furthermore both are in substantial agreement with other leading humanists in saying that God is but a projection of man's highest feelings and impulses.<sup>1</sup> Potter and Sellars say that man created his God in the past. In the future by the power of the same creative genius he will create his own standards and values. Also both are anxious to dismiss the idea of supernaturalisms from our minds. The word is anathema to them. Potter and Sellars are logical in showing that since man is the highest thing in the universe there is no need of any worship. Potter suggests meditation as a substitute while Sellars is content to remove it

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 13, 22.

from the humanist's ritual. Needless to say they have little faith in Christ as the leader of the spiritual life of today.<sup>2</sup> Potter doubts the wisdom of Christ; Sellars questions the existence of Christ. Both are advocates of the scientific method in religion.

However there are matters upon which Potter and Sellars do not agree. Potter is a popular agnostic while Sellars is a philosophical atheist. Sellars is more dogmatic than Potter and his atheism is thorough-going and inclusive. Although both agree on the importance of the scientific method, while Potter in his enthusiasm is ready to accept it as the content and goal of his humanism, Sellars does not give such a blind allegiance to science. He says, "It is a great mistake to go to science to find out what religion is. All science can do is to help us decide what religion we should not believe in."<sup>3</sup> Sellars depends on philosophy for his guidance. The naive trust which Potter has in science causes him to regard it as the Savior of society, a belief shared by many of his fellow humanists.<sup>4</sup>

Potter is impatient with the modernists in theology, regarding them as compromisers with traditional supernaturalism.<sup>5</sup> Sellars is more sympathetic with the modernists.<sup>6</sup> He is quite

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<sup>2</sup>Potter, HR, 220; Sellars, NSR, 82-83; Supra 17, 41.

<sup>3</sup>Sellars, RCA, 143.

<sup>4</sup>Art. 5, Appendix.

<sup>5</sup>Potter, HUM, 44. This is a strange position for a former Unitarian to take.

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<sup>3</sup>Sellars, RCA, 143.

<sup>4</sup>See, S, Appendix.

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<sup>6</sup>Sellars, RCA, 277.

willing to praise them as being seekers for the true light.

The greatest divergence of opinion between Potter and Sellars occurs in their attitudes toward the cosmic energy. This is a doctrine peculiar to Potter. He is a firm believer in a power which pervades the universe,<sup>7</sup> while there is no mention of any such power in Sellars' philosophy. It is extremely difficult to analyze Potter's conception of this cosmic energy. Apparently it is a blind and impersonal power which is in the universe, yet man is the product of it. Again, this power is separated from both man and the universe, yet is immanent in both. Some might compare Potter's idea of this cosmic unconscious power to Sellars' idea of emergent evolution. The comparison would hardly be justified as Sellars' concepts of "organization" and "novelty" cannot be called power.

#### B. The Nature of Man.

True to the humanistic theory, Potter and Sellars exalt man as the uncrowned king. Personality is their slogan.<sup>8</sup> It is the explanation and justification of man's existence, the creator of values and the critic of conduct. Both stress the growth of personality. Dualism is a word which causes the wrath of Potter and Sellars. They attack it as a traditional, theistic, concept which causes endless confusion.<sup>9</sup> They think of mind and matter as bound together and consciousness as

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<sup>7</sup>Potter, HUM, 57; Supra, 13.

<sup>8</sup>Potter, HR, 106; Sellars, EN, 342; Supra, 17, 43, 44.

<sup>9</sup>Potter, HR, 262; Supra, 19.



Willing to praise them as being seekers for the true light.

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Gellera occurs in their attitudes toward the cosmic energy.

This is a doctrine peculiar to Potter. He is a firm believer

in a power which pervades the universe,<sup>7</sup> while there is no

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<sup>7</sup>Potter, HUM, 87; Quora, 13.

<sup>8</sup>Potter, MR, 108; Gellera, MR, 342; Quora, 17, 43, 44.

<sup>9</sup>Potter, MR, 284; Quora, 19.



being an intrinsic part of the living organism. Also they regret the dualism in popular thought which regards the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the natural, as words describing separate spheres of life. For them, the natural is both sacred and spiritual.

Both Potter and Sellars have a high opinion of the natural man. Morality is a natural part of man, to do good his first inclination.<sup>10</sup> As is the case with other humanists, Potter and Sellars believe that morality and values are the product of the tribe, not of the tribal god. Values have no cosmic validity nor morals any supernatural sanction; both are products of the social environment. Conscience becomes the product of the total moral experience of the whole group.

Potter puts more emphasis on self-perfection than does Sellars. The former is an ardent believer in Utopia and has a clear vision of the ideal man in the perfect state. Sellars is not so given to visions, probably due to his emphasis on continued emergence. Sellars says little about self-sacrifice or the social aspects of morals. His emphasis is on the individual. Potter substitutes self-giving for self-sacrifice and places much emphasis upon the former.<sup>11</sup> This is probably due to his early theistic background. Sellars having made the soul an integral part of the organism has no choice but to deny any intimation of immortality.<sup>12</sup> Potter feels that we should await

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<sup>10</sup>Sellars, PPR, 458.

<sup>11</sup>Potter, HUM, 30; Supra, 25-26.

<sup>12</sup>Sellars, RCA, 191-192; Supra, 56.



being an intrinsic part of the living organism. Also they regard the dualism in popular thought which regards the sacred and the secular, the spiritual and the natural, as words describing separate spheres of life. For them, the natural is both sacred and spiritual.

Both Potter and Bellars have a high opinion of the natural man. Morality is a natural part of man, to do good his first inclination.<sup>10</sup> As is the case with other humanists, Potter and Bellars believe that morality and values are the product of the tribe, not of the tribal god. Values have no cosmic validity nor morals any supernatural sanction; both are products of the social environment. Conscience becomes the product of the total moral experience of the whole group.

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<sup>10</sup>Bellars, PER, 458.  
<sup>11</sup>Potter, HUM, 30; ANTH, 22-23.  
<sup>12</sup>Bellars, HGA, 191-192; SUPPL, 56.

Potter feels that we should await the verdict of science--his infallible guide.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile he proceeds on the assumption that personal immortality is but another dream of traditional theism.

### C. The Nature of the World.

Potter has little to say about cosmology, his primary interest being the place of man in his universe. Speaking in general terms, Potter and Sellars are sophisticated materialists in their world view, although both would deny this judgment of their position. Potter says that we "have a continuity with all life, yes, with all matter and we find in that feeling of monism sufficient to attract us without worrying about where we are going when we die."<sup>14</sup>

Potter differs from Sellars in that he confesses ignorance regarding the origin of the world.<sup>15</sup> Sellars thinks that he has found an answer to the traditional riddle.<sup>16</sup> He regards the world as having no beginning, a very adroit way of conquering a difficult question. The poverty of Potter's thought is seen in the absence from his pages of his books of any discussion of the problem of evil. His program of social reform shows that he recognizes its existence. Sellars contends that good and evil are but two terms which acquire significance only as

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<sup>13</sup>Supra, 31.

<sup>14</sup>Potter, HR, 249.

<sup>15</sup>Loc. Cit.

<sup>16</sup>Sellars, RCA, 162-166.



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Potter differs from Bellars in that he confesses ignorance regarding the origin of the world.<sup>20</sup> Bellars claims that he has found an answer to the traditional riddle.<sup>21</sup> He regards the world as having no beginning, a very subtle way of non-questioning a difficult question. The poverty of Potter's thought is seen in his silence from his pages of his books of any discussion of the problem of evil. His program of social reform shows that he recognizes its existence. Bellars contends that good and evil are but two terms which acquire significance only as

<sup>18</sup> Supra, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Potter, HR, 243.

<sup>20</sup> Loc. Cit.

<sup>21</sup> Bellars, SCA, 133-134.

we give it to them, for in themselves they are neutral. Potter in his enthusiasm for the greatness and glory of man does not see the problem of evil as a big issue. He is an optimist through and through and sees the perfect man as an inevitable figure, while on the horizon he perceives the outline of the perfect city. He is so impressed with the goodness and greatness of man that he is unimpressed by the evil of men. Sellars is too much of a realist to agree with Potters on this point. Although he has faith in man, he doubts that man will ever have clean hands and a pure heart. Murder will continue to be a problem, poverty will still haunt our homes, evil passions will still rage in the future as well as the past. Good and evil will exist side by side.

The discussion of teleology occupies a considerable place in Sellars' writings on religion and philosophy. Potter treats the subject in a very cursory, almost negligible manner. His few statements concerning purpose are somewhat contradictory. He says in one place,<sup>18</sup> "that the universe has purpose is the primary assumption of all thought." However by the universe he seems to be referring to man, holding that man gives purpose to nature. Sellars denies purpose and also chance, believing that what we have in the universe is causality and design based on growth.<sup>19</sup>

This brief comparison has shown that Potter is a romancer

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<sup>17</sup>Sellars, NSR, 167.

<sup>18</sup>Potter, HUM, 15.

<sup>19</sup>Sellars, RCA, 216; Supra, 59



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This brief comparison has shown that Potter is a romanticist

<sup>17</sup>Sellers, MSR, 187.

<sup>18</sup>Potter, H.M., 15.

<sup>19</sup>Sellers, HCA, 218; MSR, 59.

and a visionary with a naive faith in man and science. Sellars is a hard-headed realist and rationalist, believing that religious faith is useless and religion is superstition, but with no faith that the dismissal of religion will result in the golden age.

*The Value of their Humanism.*

1. Ethical. In a time when morality has fallen upon evil days and ethics become a subject to be shunned, a system which stresses the ethical element in life does much to justify its advocates. Potter and Sellars belong to that group of humanists who are eager to "establish justice in the world." The four-fold path of life as set forth by Potter<sup>1</sup> is an example of the high moral content of the message of humanism. While they are unwilling to support traditional religion, they nevertheless stress the fact that humanism has a firm belief in what some have known as the "prophetic word."<sup>2</sup> This ethical quality is the philosophy of Potter and Sellars. It is to be expected that humanists will stress the ethical element in their lives. It is not sufficient for a humanist, who believes that the laws of the universe are laid in righteousness, to have faith in the laws of morality, but for a humanist, who believes that the universe is indifferent, to have that same faith demand a great effort on his part. Potter and Sellars look out into the world which is either indifferent or hostile to their

<sup>1</sup> Brown, *etc.*, 147.

<sup>2</sup> Potter, *HR*, 31; *Supra*, 24-26.

<sup>3</sup> Potter, *HR*, 113; *Supra*, 13.



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## CHAPTER V

### CRITICISM OF POTTER AND SELLARS

#### A. The Value of their Humanism.

1. Ethical. In a time when morality has fallen upon evil days and ethics becomes a subject to be shunned, a system which stresses the ethical element in life does much to justify its advocates. Potter and Sellars belong to that group of humanists<sup>1</sup> who are eager to "establish justice in the gates." The four-fold path of life as set forth by Potter<sup>2</sup> is an example of the high moral content of the message of humanism. While they are unwilling to support traditional religion, they nevertheless stress the fact that humanism has a firm belief in what have been known as the predicates of God.<sup>3</sup> This ethical quality in the philosophy of Potter and Sellars is to be especially commended because of their attitude toward the universe. It is not difficult for a theist, who believes that the beams of the universe were laid in righteousness, to have faith in the laws of morality, but for a humanist, who believes that the cosmos is indifferent, to have that same faith demands a great effort on his part. Potter and Sellars look out into the world which is either indifferent or hostile to their

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, PTC, 147.

<sup>2</sup>Potter, HR, 31; Supra, 24-25.

<sup>3</sup>Potter, HUM, 119; Supra, 13.



## CHAPTER V

### CRITICISM OF POTTER AND GELLARS

#### A. The Value of Their Humanism.

1. Unethical. In a time when morality has fallen upon evil days and ethics becomes a subject to be shunned, a system which stresses the ethical element in life does much to justify its advocates. Potter and Gellars belong to that group of humanists who are eager to "establish justice in the system." The four-fold path of life as set forth by Potter<sup>2</sup> is an example of the high moral content of the message of humanism. While they are unwilling to support traditional religion, they nevertheless stress the fact that humanism has a firm belief in what have been known as the predicates of God.<sup>3</sup> This ethical quality in the philosophy of Potter and Gellars is to be especially commended because of their attitude toward the universe. It is not difficult for a theist, who believes that the beams of the universe were laid in righteousness, to have faith in the laws of morality, but for a humanist, who believes that the cosmos is indifferent, to have the same faith demands a great effort on his part. Potter and Gellars look out into the world which is either indifferent or hostile to faith

<sup>1</sup> Brown, etc., 147.

<sup>2</sup> Potter, H.R., 31; Supra, 22-23.

<sup>3</sup> Potter, H.U.M., 112; Supra, 12.

highest aspiration, yet say that personal integrity and great living are worthwhile and possible. This attitude may be beyond the theist's comprehension but it is not outside his admiration.

2. Pragmatic. A recent writer,<sup>4</sup> in his evaluation of humanism, says that one of the strong points of this faith is "its determination to test religious truth by the human values which that truth helps to realize." This judgment would apply to Potter and Sellars. These two men feel that religion has failed. Potter surveys the history of religion and decides that the God-idea has handicapped the race.<sup>5</sup> Sellars comes to the conclusion that religion is inadequate to meet the present situation.<sup>6</sup> Religion they claim has failed to meet the pragmatic test, "By their fruits shall ye know them." Their humanism is pragmatic. They claim that it develops character and gives a dynamic and goal to life. This demand that our faith be judged by our works is a wholesome one and humanism will serve as a check to that extreme type of mysticism which limits its religious exercise to dreams and visions.

3. Social. A philosophy of life which takes into account the needs of men and that is dedicated to the alleviation of those needs seems to be one of the main characteristics of humanism, as held by Potter and Sellars. They are anxious to

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<sup>4</sup>Nixon, ECF, 249.

<sup>5</sup>Potter, HUM, 38; Supra, 12.

<sup>6</sup>Sellars, NSR, 11; Supra, 41.



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<sup>4</sup>Nixon, 207, 249.

<sup>5</sup>Potter, HUM, 26; 207, 12.

<sup>6</sup>Sellers, NBR, 11; 207, 41.



fight evil in high and low places and refuse to postpone the battle for righteousness because they cannot see the face of the Almighty. In this battle against evil they are ready to accept the latest method in science with which they are acquainted. Their theory is that there should be experiment in the moral and spiritual world as well as the economic world. In this way they hope to find the truth to the end that men might live more abundantly.

Future generations will probably think of this social emphasis in humanism as its greatest contribution to the life of its day. In a day when the church has been slow in recognizing her responsibility to the physical needs of men, humanism arouses the defenders of orthodoxy to action. The humanism which works for a better social order may be limited in scope but it is prophetic in its sphere. Nor is it to be understood that the social philosophy of humanism is wholly a matter of theory. The First Humanist Society of New York, founded by Potter, is carrying on a great humanitarian work. Also he has some good suggestions for better legislation<sup>7</sup> and his social interests cover a wide range.<sup>8</sup> Sellars is sincerely troubled about our present social order and has written a book advocating a reconstruction of society.<sup>9</sup> This constant demand that our lives and our philosophy serve our neighbor as ourself

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<sup>7</sup>Potter, HUM, 124-125.

<sup>8</sup>Potter, HR. This book is not limited to a discussion of religion but a bold attempt to set forth ways in which all of man's social life could be humanized.



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is a wholesome aspect of their philosophy.

## B. Errors and Exaggerations in Statement.

1. Errors. The following criticisms do not propose to be either a philosophical refutation of humanism or a logical defense of theism. Either task would require a volume. These criticisms are merely an attempt to set forth some of the fundamental weaknesses in the reasoning of Potter and Sellars. The purpose of this immediate topic is to point out some evident technical errors in their philosophy of religion.

One of the most obvious errors in the teaching of Potter and Sellars is their false definition of supernatural.<sup>10</sup> Potter's idea of revelation seems to be that forked lightning leaps from the sky into the hands of men. Both Potter and Sellars make a widergulf between the natural and the supernatural than did the old theologians. Potter scoffs at knowledge by revelation and on the other hand exalts the powers of the human mind. Apparently he forgets that theism holds that some knowledge comes by intuition and the latter is not thunder from the skies but a whisper in the soul. These men see the two categories, natural and supernatural, they rule out the latter as impossible and proceed to deal only with the former.

Potter and Sellars constantly remind us that humanism is characterized by the method of open and unprejudiced invest-

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<sup>9</sup>Sellars, NSD.

<sup>10</sup>Supra, 12-14.



is a wholesale aspect of their philosophy.

B. errors and misstatements in statements.

1. Errors. The following criticisms do not propose to

be either a philosophical refutation or a logical defense of them. Rather, I shall point out some of the errors and misstatements and merely an attempt to set forth some of the logical weaknesses in the reasoning of Potter and Salter. The purpose of this immediate topic is to point out some evident theoretical errors in their philosophy of religion.

One of the most obvious errors in the reasoning of Potter and Salter is their false definition of supernaturalism.<sup>10</sup> The term's idea of revelation seems to be that of a lightning bolt from the sky into the hands of men. Both Potter and Salter make a wide gap between the natural and the supernatural. They are not the old theologians. Potter admits at knowledge by revelation and on the other hand exists the powers of the human mind. Apparently he forgets that human knowledge is not a lightning bolt from the sky but a whisper in the ear. There can be no categorical, natural and supernatural, they rule out the latter as impossible and proceed to deal only with the former. Potter and Salter consistently regard us as humanism is characterized by the method of open and unprejudiced investigation.

<sup>10</sup> Salter, 1930.

<sup>11</sup> Salter, 1930.



igation. Perhaps this is humanism the ideal, but it is certainly not humanism, the reality. Potter and Sellars can see only two sides to a question, their own and the opposite extreme. It is usually a man of straw whom they proceed to murder. Thus they slay an idea of the supernatural which both science and religion have killed long since. Furthermore, if open and unprejudiced investigation is to be the motto, why should Potter and Sellars be surprised when someone declares himself a theist? If they desire to be allowed to explore in the realm of religion, can they deny that same privilege to their opponents? It is evident that Potter and Sellars, despite their liberalism, are dogmatists.

The attitude taken by Potter and Sellars, especially the latter, toward the church is a strange one. Sellars has either erred in his definition of the church or he has not been logical.<sup>11</sup> He cannot be consistent and agree to stand by an institution based upon the two cardinal principles of a belief in a Deity and the worship of that deity. This is superstition according to Sellars and he can do nothing less than renounce the church.

Finally, Potter and Sellars have erred in their interpretation of theism. They assume that the liberal social tenets of humanism cannot be found in theism. A careful reading of the social program of humanism as outlined by Potter<sup>12</sup> reveals

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<sup>11</sup>Sellars, RCA, 286-289.



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Finally, Potter and Sellars have erred in their interpretation of theism. They assume that the liberal social formula of humanism cannot be found in theism. A careful reading of the social program of humanism as outlined by Potter<sup>12</sup> reveals

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<sup>11</sup>Sellars, RGA, 255-259.



nothing which is contrary to theistic views. Every constructive suggestion which they set forth may be found in theism. Indeed, one has a suspicion that Potter and Sellars borrowed their social and ethical ideals from theism.

2. Many Sweeping Statements. One of the characteristics of the scientific mind is that it is cautious, proceeding only on the basis of fact and not drawing certain conclusions because of prejudice or preconceived ideas. We would expect this attitude to characterize the writing of Potter and Sellars. Such is not the case however, for their writings abound in general conclusions which are neither scientific nor accurate. Sellars says, "Insanity is due to a functional disorder of the brain,"<sup>13</sup> and goes on to show by illustration that there is something out of place in the physical part of the brain. It is true that this is the cause of some insanity but to advance this as the cause of insanity is to disregard all the findings of mental hygiene and abnormal psychology, which inform us that insanity is often caused by the lack of co-ordination in the personality of the individual. In another place Sellars shows a regrettable lack of knowledge of psychology when he says, "Experiment sappers in laboratories of biology and psychology are seeking to show that mind is just a term for certain capacities of control exercised by the brain."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Potter, HUM, 124-125.

<sup>13</sup>Sellars, NSR, 146.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 99.



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### 3. Mary Swearing Statement. One of the characteristics

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<sup>13</sup>Potter, H.M., 124-125.

<sup>14</sup>Sellers, H.M., 146.



He fails to recognize the findings of dynamic and functional psychology. One other illustration of exaggerations which approach error may be cited. Sellars states that science arose at the time of the Renaissance.<sup>15</sup> Now it is true that the century preceeding and including the Renaissance Era was marked by great advances in sciences, but to say that this period saw the birth of science is a gross exaggeration. Such men as Euclid, Hipparchus, and Ptolemy had died nearly two thousand years before the age of the Renaissance. The field of general science is one of which Sellars should have a fair knowledge. His reading public is quite likely to take his word as authority, and the least he could do would be to say that these are his opinions and that many competent authorities have opposite views.

When we turn to Potter's and Sellars' criticisms of religion we are met with more startling conclusions. Potter begins one of the arguments for humanism by informing the world that theism is a dead issue.<sup>16</sup> In another place he says, "the old religion....is based on premises now known to be false."<sup>17</sup> By the "old religion" does he mean theism? What does he mean by "proven"? Has the idea of God proved to be false? Has the hope of immortality died in every breast?

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<sup>15</sup>Sellars, NSR, 62.

<sup>16</sup>Potter, HUM, 38; Supra, 10-11.

<sup>17</sup>Potter, HR, 160.



He fails to recognize the findings of dynamics and functional psychology. The other illustration of exaggeration which approach error may be cited. Sellars states that science arose at the time of the Renaissance.<sup>15</sup> Now it is true that the century preceding and including the Renaissance was marked by great advances in sciences, but to say that this period saw the birth of science is a gross exaggeration. Such men as Galileo, Hipparchus, and Ptolemy had died nearly two thousand years before the age of the Renaissance. The field of general science is one of which Sellars should have a fair knowledge. His reading public is quite likely to take his word as authority, and one might be well to say that there are his opinions and that many competent authorities have opposite views.

When we turn to Foster's and Sellars' criticism of religion we are met with some startling conclusions. Foster begins one of the arguments for humanism by informing the reader that there is a dead issue.<sup>16</sup> In another place he says, "The old religion... is based on premises now known to be false."<sup>17</sup> By the "old religion" does he mean theism? What does he mean by "proved"? Has the idea of God proved to be false? Has the hope of immortality died in every breast?

<sup>15</sup>Sellars, *HR*, 52.

<sup>16</sup>Foster, *HUM*, 26; *SALES*, 10-11.

<sup>17</sup>Foster, *HR*, 150.

Has every thinker arrived at the conclusion that teleology is nothing but a superstitious idea held over from primitive times? Now Potter may think all these ideas are false and he is entitled to his own opinion, but he has no right to say that theism is dead and buried long since. It is true that theism has fallen upon evil days in many quarters and is being sorely buffeted by friends and foes, but it is far from dead. However, Potter is in good humanistic company when he makes such unwarranted statements.<sup>18</sup>

Potter is nothing if not a keen observer when he says, "The revolution in religion is here,"<sup>19</sup> by which he implies that all of us have become humanists or are in the process of doing so. Garrison<sup>20</sup> well expresses our thought when he asks the question, "Where is the revolution?" It is safe to say that the majority of people have never heard of the word humanism and that the minority of the people remain unimpressed by it.

Even a casual reader of Sellars will soon recognize that he seems incapable of appreciating historical theology. Sellars takes pains to inform us that theology originated in mythology and magic and has lived in that atmosphere ever since. No student of history would dispose of the theologies of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, and Wesley by condemning such

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<sup>18</sup>Appendix, Art. 6.

<sup>19</sup>Potter, HUM, 3.

<sup>20</sup>Garrison in HABL, King (ed.), 158-159.



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<sup>18</sup> Appendix, Art. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Potter, HUM, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Garrison to HARR, KING (ed.), 133-134.



theologies as systems of magic. In the capacity of a higher critic of the New Testament, Sellars leaves much to be desired. He concludes that Mark was written by an unknown author at an unknown date, that Luke was written by an unknown figure long after the fall of Jerusalem, that none of the gospels were written by eye witnesses. However, he makes his gravest error in saying that no mention of the life or sayings of Christ can be found in Paul's epistles. Every reader knows they can be found, and furthermore it has been found possible to construct the whole life of Christ from Paul's epistles.<sup>21</sup>

These are samples of sweeping statements which Sellars is inclined to make, and he states them with the calm assurance that they are the unanimous conclusions of all great scholars. Such statements as the above lead one to entertain some doubts as to the validity of some of the conclusions of humanism. If they base their arguments on such unsupported evidence, there is much opportunity for the formation of false conclusions. Any student of Biblical criticism knows that few scholars would support such wild conclusions. It is to be hoped that humanists who are so firmly wedded to the idea of scientific investigation will put their principles into practice and thus save themselves much embarrassment.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Griffith, SLC. Acts This book is a complete refutation of Sellars' claim.

<sup>22</sup>That Potter and Sellars are fairly representative of the leaders of humanism is seen when we note that Reese says, "Jesus is historically doubtful and not religiously helpful." HR, 50.



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Sellars' argument is that Christianity is the religion of a very small group who are not concerned with this world,<sup>23</sup> reminds one of those exaggerated pronouncements so often uttered by Nietzsche. The above view hardly needs to be commented on. If Sellars were referring to the present time, he would be giving his opinion of the inadequacy of Christianity; but he is making an interpretation of history, and his conclusions are unjustified. No competent historian would agree that Christians have not been concerned with this world, anymore than he would agree that six hundred million people are a small group.

#### C. The Limited Range of their Concept of Religion.

1. Is humanism a religion? The reader finds this question constantly re-echoing in his mind as he studies the writings of Potter and Sellars. There is no doubt how Potter would answer the question. He concludes that humanism "is both a religion and a philosophy of culture."<sup>24</sup> Sellars admits that he debated the question before finally deciding to use the word "religion".<sup>25</sup> Is humanism a religion? It is true that no term so frequently used by men and referring to so singular a phenomenon of our life as religion is so difficult to define. It is not that we suffer from lack of definitions; they are as many as the sands on the seashore. One recent writer records no less than forty-eight definitions<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Sellars, RCA, 263-265; Supra, 51.

<sup>24</sup>Potter, HUM, 114.



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<sup>23</sup>Salisbury, *WCA*, 263-267; *Quoted*, 51.

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by as many learned men.<sup>26</sup> However all definitions of religion have some common characteristics. Fraser in his famous work defines religion in this manner: "A propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life."<sup>27</sup> This definition meets the approval of the authority in the encyclopedia.<sup>28</sup> Such well known writers in the field of philosophy, sociology, and religion as Pratt,<sup>29</sup> Sharp,<sup>30</sup> Hopkins,<sup>31</sup> Menzies,<sup>32</sup> Ellwood,<sup>33</sup> Brown,<sup>34</sup> Leighton,<sup>35</sup> and Hume<sup>36</sup> favor this view as do our encyclopedias.<sup>37</sup>

Definitions could be multiplied but perhaps we shall facilitate the progress of our discussion by accepting the definition which is given in Webster's new dictionary. Religion

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<sup>25</sup>Sellars, NSR, 220-221.

<sup>26</sup>Leuba, PSR, App., 339-361.

<sup>27</sup>Frazer, GB, I, 222.

<sup>28</sup>Galloway, EB, xix, 104-105.

<sup>29</sup>Pratt, RC, 2.

<sup>30</sup>Sharp, ETH, 387.

<sup>31</sup>Hopkins, HOR, 1-6.

<sup>32</sup>Menzies, HOR, 9.

<sup>33</sup>Ellwood, ROR, 47.

<sup>34</sup>Brown, CTO, 29.

<sup>35</sup>Leighton, FOP, 586.

<sup>36</sup>Hume, WLR, 2.

<sup>37</sup>ERE, x, 693; CE, xii, 739.



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- <sup>26</sup> Landa, PRA, App., 251-251.
- <sup>27</sup> Fraser, GS, I, 222.
- <sup>28</sup> Selloway, ES, XIX, 104-105.
- <sup>29</sup> Pratt, SC, 2.
- <sup>30</sup> Sharp, SM, 387.
- <sup>31</sup> Hopkins, HOB, 1-2.
- <sup>32</sup> Menzies, HOB, 9.
- <sup>33</sup> Ellwood, HOB, 47.
- <sup>34</sup> Brown, GEO, 29.
- <sup>35</sup> Laitman, HOB, 286.
- <sup>36</sup> Hume, WLB, 2.
- <sup>37</sup> Hume, WLB, 2, 282; 28, XII, 252.

is here defined as, "The outward act or form by which men indicate their recognition of the existence of a god or gods having power over their destiny, and to whom obedience, service, and honor are due." Now, Potter and Sellars do not believe that there is any object in the universe which is higher than man, "Humanism is just that--faith in man."<sup>38</sup> We should have to look for a long time before we could find any religion in this conception.<sup>39</sup> Sellars has nothing better to offer in the form of a definition. He says, "Religion is loyalty to the values of life,"<sup>40</sup> and "Religion is beyond all things an expression of human life,"<sup>41</sup>--and "the spiritual is not something painful, but it is something which concerns the quality of human life."<sup>42</sup> These definitions hardly satisfy any historical or standard definition of religion. There is one humanist who recognizes the fact that his belief does not fit into any definition of religion. Walker says, "Unless we are ready to give an entirely new meaning to religion, there is no religion without God."<sup>43</sup> In the face of these facts we must conclude with Brightman that humanism is not a religion because,

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<sup>38</sup>Potter, HR, 88.

<sup>39</sup>Religion would vanish if the whole tale of its value were shifted to the human sphere," Hocking, MGHE, 9.

<sup>40</sup>Sellars, NSR, 7.

<sup>41</sup>Sellars, RCA, 51.

<sup>42</sup>Sellars, NSR, 9.

<sup>43</sup>Walker, HAWL, 62-63.



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<sup>41</sup>Sellars, RCA, 51.

<sup>42</sup>Sellars, WAR, 9.

<sup>43</sup>Weiser, HART, 62-63.



Any experience or belief which includes no reference to the more than human is improperly called religion, whatever use it might make of religious terminology or emotions otherwise associated with religion.<sup>44</sup>

2. Absence of divine personality. As already noted Potter and Sellars are not friendly to any form of theism. It is not difficult to understand how Potter came to be an agnostic. He has been a patient devotee at the shrine of science. Science has not been able to offer him conclusive proof that there is a Cosmic Intelligence, which has led Potter to conclude that there is no God. It is surely a naive faith which accepts science as the final authority in matters of religion. If Potter was more critical he would discover that he makes larger claims for scientists than they do for themselves. The attitude of the teacher of science is well expressed in the following statement:

Whatever spiritual reality may underlie the events of nature is eternally inaccessible to science....There can be....no direct collision between the idea of God and the demands of science. Any apparent clashing that may occur must involve false deductions from the basis principles of one or the other. Whether God be imminent or transcendent or illusory, He must remain forever un-illuminated by the scientific torch.<sup>45</sup>

As already pointed out, Potter and Sellars have a strange definition of the supernatural. This leads them to think of God as "up there" and man as "down here", a distinction which reveals that they are mistaking theism for deism. Nobody who understands

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<sup>44</sup>Brightman, RV, 136.

<sup>45</sup>Dingle, PAG, 46.



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<sup>44</sup> *Prigmore*, p. 125.

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the theistic belief in the immanence of God could ever make such a crude mistake.

However the subject of God cannot be dismissed in such a manner because in their denial of theism they have laid themselves open to some criticism. What does Potter mean by cosmic energy? Is it matter or mind? Is it God or man? Apparently it is outside of man and Potter would deny that it is God. Man is the manifestation of it,<sup>46</sup> yet it is not conscious. It is neither personal nor conscious, yet it has purpose, at least Potter implies that when he counsels us to get in step with this cosmic energy.<sup>47</sup> This is hardly a challenge that stirs our souls, because it means that we are called upon to follow a blind, impersonal, unconscious, and purposeless cosmic energy. Potter believes in the blind leading the blind. A blind guide is a very poor one, but an unconscious one leaves still more to be desired. It requires some imagination to see how such a guide is to save us from doom. Common sense would agree with scripture that the ditch awaits us both. One is almost tempted to remark that the idea of a blind spirit of energy wandering around in the universe and leading pilgrims to the Celestial City has a strong flavor of magic to it.

Potter and Sellars do not lack faith; they have an abundance of it. They admit that the first and fundamental impulse is to believe.<sup>48</sup> This statement sounds like one of the

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<sup>46</sup>Potter, HUM, 58.

<sup>47</sup>Potter, HR, 195-196.



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<sup>47</sup> Potter, *Hum.*, 66.

<sup>48</sup> Potter, *ibid.*, 10-11.



main arguments for theism, thus Hocking says, "We as a group of human selves know that we are not alone in the universe; that is a first and persistent intuition."<sup>49</sup> This tendency of man to believe in some Power which has something to do with man and his world will continue to present a stumbling block to any system, such as humanism, which informs man that such a belief is superstition.

A very great weakness in the humanism of Potter and Sellars is their attempt to analyze without explaining. They tell us why we believe in God, draw some general conclusions, and decide that the idea of God is an outworn one. Sellars continues and tells us that he has a theory that will explain everything from electrons to love. His explanation consists of "novelty", "emergence" and other dark words. Now the word "emergent" might tell how a thing came into being, but it does not explain why it came into being. Sellars describes a process and thinks he has explained the cause. It is true that we find novelty in the world, but that does not explain the word or the things therein. This is hardly an adequate cosmology. After all of Potter's glorification of life as such what has he told about life, its source and why we have it? How does Sellars answer the question of the why of the universe? "The universe is; it is useless to ask whence it came for it always was.....," is his answer;<sup>50</sup> which is no answer at all to the

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<sup>48</sup>Sellars, NSR, 129.

<sup>49</sup>Hocking, TOP, 442. See also Richards, BIM, 96.







question of why. If there is no intelligence, why is there novelty? Does that barren word explain the spirit of Grenfell or the cross of Christ? Does the word explain the finer things of human life, love, self-sacrifice, duty? Does it interpret our ideals and our dreams? After all, emergence means the coming forth of variety and novelty into the physical world, and how can the physical world explain ideal and spiritual aspirations? "If the universe is at bottom only the outcome of physical forces, the mystery is as to how these physical forces cast such a highly spiritual projection of themselves."<sup>51</sup> To talk about life and novelty is to speak of things which demand an explanation. If we follow Sellars we are forced to the ultimate conclusion that the intelligent must be explained in terms of the unintelligent.<sup>52</sup>

3. Man as God. Potter and Sellars are still human enough to feel the need of some standard of conduct and inspirer of action. Contrary to past experience they have not sought the sky for a god or searched the universe for a helper. They recognize neither the rising sun or the waning moon. The vast cosmic process does not fill their souls with awe or cause them to lift their eyes to the hills for help. No, they have confined their search to the earth and man has received their unanimous nomination to a seat in the pantheon of gods.

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<sup>50</sup>Sellars, NSR, 218.

<sup>51</sup>McConnell, HAC, 147.

<sup>52</sup>Lewis, GAO, 29; Hough, PAS, ch. II, 39-67.



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<sup>52</sup> Sellars, *op. cit.*, 418.  
<sup>53</sup> Macdonald, *ibid.*, 147.  
<sup>54</sup> Lewis, *ibid.*, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152-53.

So Potter and Sellars have a new rendition of that well known verse, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the earth from whence cometh my help, my help cometh from man who made God and established religion."<sup>53</sup> Potter and Sellars do not worship Man as God, they simply honor him as the greatest and highest thing in the world. Auer well expresses the thought when he says, "It (humanism) would make man the true center of his universe and the captain of his soul."<sup>54</sup> Despite the repeated denials of Potter and Sellars that humanism may lead to Comte's "religion of humanity", it nevertheless remains true that if the laity became convinced that man was the highest thing in the universe they would worship man. A quotation from the writings of a humanist who is a layman will prove this contention. Walker says, "I worship the Perfect or Ideal Man. Such is God the Father, I know of nothing higher to worship."<sup>55</sup> Walker here implies that man must worship some object, which is a contradiction of Potter and Sellars.

The philosophy which places man at the center of the universe raises more questions than it answers. Potter and Sellars have already intimated that "man made God in his own image and likeness," to use Sheen's phrase.<sup>56</sup> What caused him to do this? Man must have had a sense of his relation to the

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<sup>53</sup>Psalm 121:1.

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<sup>56</sup> Sheen, CAL, 286.



cosmos. Man still has this sense of the infinite, this religious instinct, and how can it be explained by referring it to man himself? Can man find completion in man? Suppose we think of all men, all those who have lived in the past, all those who are now living, and all those who will live in the future. Now let us try to think of them as gathered in one vast amphitheatre singing hymns to man as their God.<sup>57</sup> It requires little work on the part of the imagination to see that there is something decidedly wrong with the picture. To say that man can be sufficient unto himself is to deny the whole history of man's experience. Furthermore, it denies Potter's own theory of cosmic energy. Potter may believe in one or the other, but he cannot believe in both.

This belief in the greatness of man, a subtle egocentric temper, is bound to produce a "psychic malaise."<sup>58</sup> An indication of this is seen in Sellars' statement that man is almost too much of a conqueror.<sup>59</sup> He is indeed an optimist who can survey the universal chaos which prevails today and announce that man is almost too much of a conqueror. It is not optimism which causes such a belief, but blindness. Man has not conquered either himself or his world. If Potter and Sellars doubt the first part of this statement, let them remember the World War; if they doubt the last part of it, let them read the list of marine disasters which have occurred these last few years. The

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<sup>57</sup>I am indebted to Nixon, ECF, 142, for this illustration.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 250.



cosmos. Man still has this sense of the infinite, this religious instinct, and now can it be explained by referring it to man himself? Can man find completion in man? Suppose we think of all men, all those who have lived in the past, all those who are now living, and all those who will live in the future. Now let us try to think of them as gathered in one vast amphitheatre singing hymns to man as their God.<sup>57</sup> It requires little work on the part of the imagination to see that there is something needlessly wrong with the picture. To say that man can be sufficient unto himself is to deny the whole history of man's experience. Furthermore, it denies Potter's own theory of cosmic energy. Potter may believe in one or the other, but he cannot believe in both.

This belief in the greatness of man, a subtle egotistic temper, is bound to produce a "psychic malaise."<sup>58</sup> An indication of this is seen in Bellini's statement that man is almost too much of a conqueror.<sup>59</sup> He is indeed an optimist who can survey the universal chaos which prevails today and announce that man is almost too much of a conqueror. It is not optimism which causes such a belief, but blindness. Man has not conquered either himself or his world. If Potter and Bellini doubt the first part of this statement, let them remember the World War; if they doubt the last part of it, let them read the list of marine disasters which have occurred since last few years. The

<sup>57</sup> I am indebted to Nixon, ECF, 148, for this illustration.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 250.



universe is not the plaything of anybody, not even a humanist.

Another important issue which Potter and Sellars raise in this connection regards the value of their attitude. Does society achieve any value by concentrating attention on its own welfare to the exclusion of all else? Does man realize value in his own life by focussing his attention on man? The answer of Potter and Sellars is in the affirmative. Are they right? This question can be more effectively answered by allowing another humanist to give his opinion.

Life devoted only to life is animal without any real human value. If life is to be fully human it must serve some end which seems in some sense outside human life, some end which is....above mankind, such as God or truth or beauty. Those who best promote life do not have life for their purpose. They aim rather at what seems a gradual incarnation, a bringing into our human existence of something eternal....remote from the devouring jaws of time. Contact with this eternal world--even if it be only the world of our imagining, brings a strength and fundamental peace which cannot be wholly destroyed by the struggles and apparent failures of our temporal life.<sup>60</sup>

This admission on the part of Russell sounds like the arguments of the theists themselves.<sup>61</sup> Potter and Sellars may yet have to admit that their goals are somewhat confused.

Another matter which Potter and Sellars seem to have forgotten is their environment. They have lived in a country where theism is the established religion. Their opinions, habits, and appreciations were formed under dominant Christian influence.

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<sup>59</sup>Sellars, RCA, 158.

<sup>60</sup>Russell, WMF, 268-269.

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<sup>59</sup>Bellar, *FOA*, 133.

<sup>60</sup>Russell, *WMT*, 228-229.

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If they realize the supreme value of personality, Christianity opened their eyes to the fact. If they have learned the sacredness of human life, Christianity has been their teacher. The very things for which they stand as humanists, "personality," "life", "service", are an integral part of the Christian message. The question now is, "If every individual in the Western World became a humanist tomorrow, what would be the result?" In answering this question we must remember that humanism to be consistent must burn all the Bibles, close all the churches, and banish the name of God from the lips of all. Perhaps there would be no revolutionary effect on this present generation, but what about the third and the fourth generations? Would the humanistic credo give to our children's children an adequate philosophy of life?

Throughout his arguments Potter advances the theory that humanity's belief in God has halted the wheels of human progress.<sup>62</sup> This is a theory which finds favor with most humanists.<sup>63</sup> It is true that theism, as held by the church, has at times halted the progress of civilization by its attitude toward science or its intolerance. On the other hand, the church saved civilization more than once, and throughout the centuries has

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massively proclaim the mastery and majesty of the Eternal and our human littleness against the background of that vastness. It is one of the approved paradoxes of life,....that this doctrine exalts and exhilarates, and does not depress or paralyze." Blyton, WHBD, 631.

<sup>62</sup>Potter, HUM, 38; Supra, 12.

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 The "Myth of Man," W.H.D., 331.

<sup>82</sup> Potter, Man, 38; Quora, 1.

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built the best things into our present day civilization. The best that we have today is a product of theism. Furthermore, Potter and Sellars argue that the God-idea is but the projection of man's highest thoughts; if this be true then man's highest thoughts and his loftiest ambitions have been a weight on the wheels of human progress. Granted that this be true, how can this present generation have faith in man? If the sum total of all men's noblest visions and highest thoughts through the ages have resulted in a curse upon the human race, in the form of theism, is it humanely possible to believe in man? Potter recognizes that faith is needed, for he says, "The faith which faces the facts and still believes in man... this is faith."<sup>64</sup> This is not faith, but credulity. If we must have such great faith anyway, why do Potter and Sellars object to the theist's directing their faith towards the God-head? The deity of man is a statement which stands disproved, not by any arguments of the theists but by the words of Potter and Sellars. The world is beginning to realize that man is not sufficient unto this day.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4. A Negative Attitude toward the Universe.

How shall we think about the universe? Do not think

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on this matter. Referring to religion, he says, "It diverts attention and energy from ideal value and from the exploration of actual conditions by means of which they may be promoted. History is a testimony to this fact....Dependence upon an external power is the counterpart of the surrender of human endeavor." ACF, 46.

<sup>64</sup>Potter, HR, 110.

<sup>65</sup>Morrison, HM, 745.



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Is it possible to separate human life from the universe of which it is a part? How can one stand upon the earth overshadowed by the wonders of the heaven, surrounded by the countless glories of nature and disregard the call of the infinite? To dismiss the cosmos as negligible is sheer bravado. Potter and Sellars accuse the theists of being conceited because they believe in a Heavenly Father who loves humanity. The same

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<sup>66</sup>Fosdick, AISR, 73.



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<sup>66</sup> Toulmin, *Atom*, 73.



accusation falls on their own heads when they count themselves of more importance than the whole vast cosmos and wish to treat it as of no importance. This same universe which, if they do not obey its laws, will ultimately crush them, defeat their plans and shatter their hopes, they regard as of no importance. This same universe which holds for them life or death, they consider to have no connection with man. Potter and Sellars may have the courage and inconsistency to hold such an attitude, but it is far too much to ask the rest of us to follow them. Indeed, they stand refuted in the camp of their comrades. Auer admits that humanism must make some answer to this important question, but so far has failed to do so.<sup>67</sup> To sum up. Potter and Sellars regard the universe as positivistic, naturalistic, and quantitative. A philosophy built upon so unstable a foundation cannot long survive.<sup>68</sup>

5. The Subjectivity of Values. As has been noted in the exposition of the philosophy of Potter and Sellars, they do not believe in the objectivity of values. In their views that values are confined to man, they are in substantial agreement with other leaders in humanism.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>"It is true that this far we have no settled opinion regarding man's relation to his larger surroundings. We are however not unwilling to entertain opinions of this sort but until now, we have had no time to formulate them. Give us time, time to verify our experiments. Do not ask us to give opinion until we are ready to prove our arguments." Auer, HSIC, 103.

<sup>68</sup>Knudson, HAB, 26; Holt in HABL, King (ed.), 126.

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It has already been stated that this chapter does not attempt to prove the tenets of theism, therefore the present discussion is not a setting forth of objections of theism to the theory of the subjectivity of value,<sup>70</sup> but we must mention several very questionable definitions used by Potter and Sellars.

Sellars defines value as desire.<sup>71</sup> It is true that value is a thing valued, but does it follow that it is valuable only because we value it? Is it true that without valuation there is no value as Reese interprets Sellars to mean?<sup>72</sup> Does my like or dislike of a thing change its value? The view has some sweeping implications. Let us illustrate by giving a concrete example of the logical outcome of this view. Let us imagine a day when the world was new and man was young. On this particular day when the sky was clear except for a few scattered banks of clouds in the West, the sun was descending towards the tree tops when our forefather, tired from the toil of the day, noticed the color in the West. It so impressed him that he paused to study it. The great golden ball, the delicate tinting of the clouds, the shooting rays of sunlight, and the glory of the western sky pleased him. It so pleased him that he desired to see it again, and so that day a sunset

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plains truth with reference to man's concern in it." Auer, HSIC, 80. "Humanism gives value a human and natural setting rather than a cosmic and transcendent one." Reese, HR, 33.

<sup>70</sup>See Brightman, RV, 102-136 for a good defence of value as more than human.



It has already been stated that this chapter does not attempt to prove the tenets of Idealism, therefore the present discussion is not a setting forth of objections of Idealism to the theory of the subjectivity of value,<sup>70</sup> but we must mention several very questionable definitions used by Potter and Sel-

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<sup>71</sup> "Humanism gives value a human and natural setting rather than a cosmic and transcendent one." Heide, III, 35.  
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was made beautiful. The emphasis here is on the word "made" because the sunset was made beautiful when our ancestor liked it. The same thing could be said of love, which Sellars must regard as being created by man. All values then are creations of man and are not the discovery of eternal principles by man. It would not require a great leap of the imagination to conclude that man created the law of the conservation of energy, or the first and second law of thermodynamics. The logical conclusion of Potter and Sellars' theory is that if we all stop loving or if we all cease to value the sunset, love will cease to be a value and the sunset will no longer be beautiful. If the great value of life depend on our like or dislike, this is a very unstable universe at best.

Potter and Sellars have created a dualism despite their horror of the word. On one hand there is a lifeless, valueless, and purposeless universe, on the other hand there is a living, valuable, and purposeful humanity. Potter and Sellars are telling us in other words that there are two worlds within this world, in one world there is no life, no value, no purpose, no meaning, while in the other world there is life, value, purpose, meaning.<sup>73</sup> Sellars has some idea of the logical implications of his argument, for he says, "It may be that the living and the lifeless....are more of the nature of contraries than of contradictories."<sup>74</sup> It may be and again it may not be;

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<sup>71</sup>Sellars, RCA, 228; Supra, 45-47.

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<sup>73</sup> Bellars, *BCA*, 228; *BCA*, 43-47.

<sup>74</sup> Bellars, *BCA*, 22.

we would think that Sellars is too much of a scientist to engage in any wishful thinking. It seems that in the last analysis a humanist uses that escape mechanism which he considers to be the favorite excuse of the theist. If Sellars is to be logical, he must agree with Bertrand Russell that the philosophy of nature is one thing and the philosophy of value is another. In nature man is subordinate, in values he creates and is king.<sup>75</sup> Sellars would hardly accept the first part of Russell's argument without a good deal of protest. Potter and Sellars must face the charge of being dualists, for while they are naturalists in their philosophy they are humanists in value.

There is a more serious charge, however, which Potter and Sellars must face, namely--holding a theory which they themselves have proved to be false. Man, so they argue, is the creator of values, and man is wholly within nature. Now it is a matter of logical necessity to conclude that if values are in man and man is wholly within the universe that values must be in the universe, for what is in a part of the whole must be in the whole. Potter and Sellars are convincing nobody but their friends<sup>76</sup> when they contend that value is not included in the cosmos.

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<sup>73</sup>Brown in HABL, King, (ed.), 239.

<sup>74</sup>Sellars, PPP, 271.

<sup>75</sup>Russell, WIB, 14-17.

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<sup>76</sup> Bellars, PFC, 271.  
<sup>77</sup> Russell, WIS, 14-15.

<sup>78</sup> Hesse has the same argument as Bellars. He tells about  
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6. Causality but no purpose. Values and purpose are very closely connected because the presence of one in the universe implies the other, and vice versa. Potter and Sellars are logical in their denial of both purpose and value. Sellars stresses the theory of emergence, the gradual appearance of new levels in the evolutionary process. Emergence is a form of development and as Barry points out,<sup>77</sup> we can only have development if we have something that develops. Does this not imply purpose? If purpose is the dynamic of personality,<sup>78</sup> there must be purpose in the cosmos because the minutest element of purpose in a universe which is bound together abolishes the idea of an aimless universe. Indeed, the very things in the universe which a humanist exalts demand a purpose. "To say that beauty and goodness and dreams are products of a world of aimless and purposeless matter is not intellectually enlightening."<sup>79</sup> We are shut up to a belief in purpose. To say that Moses and Christ, Edison and Lincoln were products of purposeless emergence is a dark saying, indeed.

7. Uncertainty of morality. Potter has some very definite ideas about morality; he says "that which improves human life is right, that which degrades human life is wrong."<sup>80</sup> This sounds like finality, but is it? It is as final as human

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<sup>77</sup>Barry, CNW, 155-156.

<sup>78</sup>Reese, HUM, 44.

<sup>79</sup>Brightman, IGP, 24. See also Richards, BIM, 98.

<sup>80</sup>Potter, HR, 30.



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<sup>77</sup> Barry, *CMJ*, 153-156.

<sup>78</sup> Bellars, *HUT*, 44.

<sup>79</sup> Bellars, *IBS*, 24. See also *Intimations*, *BM*, 28.

<sup>80</sup> Porter, *BR*, 51.



opinion. Morality, science, and art are man's creation and are of the earth, earthy.<sup>81</sup> In plain words, Sellars is saying that there is no such a thing as an eternal, moral law. But he is saying much more than that; in his enthusiasm for man he is overstating the latter's accomplishments. Is science man's creation? Did Newton create the law of gravitation? The questions are ridiculous. Every intelligent man knows that Newton discovered the law of gravitation. Did man create the principles of art? No, the artist must conform to these principles before he is able to produce his masterpiece. In music, the singer or the player cannot create new notes; they must limit their creation to new combinations of the fundamental notes. In the realm of science and art man does not create laws and principles, he discovers and conforms to them. Both Potter and Sellars must concede this point or else be willing to be unscientific in their philosophy. Now the question is, if they admit the above argument, will they not be forced to admit that there is present in the universe eternal moral laws? But they refuse to admit this for the very good reason that it places morality and its laws beyond man. It limits man and at the same time gives some significance to the cosmos; therefore a humanist must deny it. Sellars will be forced to say that the principle "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap,"<sup>82</sup> is the creation of man. But what intelligent person would contend that moral deterioration depends on the opinion of man? Does the validity of the law of sowing and reaping (morally) depend on my acceptance of it? Does the principle of moral



opinion. Morality, science, and art are man's creation and not of the earth, earthy. In plain words, Bellamy is saying that there is no such a thing as an eternal, moral law. But he is saying much more than that; in his enthusiasm for man he is overstating the latter's accomplishments. Is science man's creation? Did Newton create the law of gravitation? The questions are ridiculous. Every intelligent man knows that Newton discovered the law of gravitation. Did man create the principles of art? No, the artist must conform to these principles before he is able to produce his masterpiece. In words, the singer or the player cannot create new notes; they must limit their attention to new combinations of the fundamental notes. In the realm of science and art man does not create laws and principles, he discovers and conforms to them. Both Pöster and Bellamy must concede this point or else be willing to be inconsistent in their philosophy. Now the question is, if they admit the above argument, will they not be forced to admit that there is present in the universe eternal moral laws? But they refuse to admit this for the very good reason that it places morality and its laws beyond man. It limits man and at the same time gives some significance to the cosmos; therefore a humanist must deny it. Bellamy will be forced to say that the principle "whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap," is the creation of man. But what intelligent person would deny that moral deterioration depends on the opinion of man? Does the validity of the law of sowing and reaping (morally) depend on my acceptance of it? Does the principle of moral

deterioration rest on Sellars' acceptance of it? If everybody in the world ceased to believe in these laws would it make any difference? Could man by common consent change these moral principles? To ask these questions is to answer them in the negative.

Potter and Sellars may object to this line of reasoning by saying that we are assuming too much. Moral codes are fashioned by experience and not by any external authority is their contention. The question of internal and external authority is a debatable one, but we shall grant that what they say is true. But this does not disprove our contention. Moral codes have been evolved because man discovered by experiment certain fundamental moral laws. When society became willing to conform to these laws, progress was made and the ethical standards were raised. We conclude that moral laws are not the creation of man. However, as already pointed out, Potter and Sellars cannot admit this and still be consistent because they say the universe is indifferent to values or morality.

Potter and Sellars have a very inadequate theory of evil. Potter's theory is not a theory at all, but a definition; to say that evil is that which degrades man is simply to tell what it does; it does not explain its origin. Sellars thinks that good and evil considered from an objective standpoint do not differ from each other. Evil is evil only because we say

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<sup>81</sup> Sellars, NSR, 222.

<sup>82</sup> Galatians 6:7.



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it is, in itself it is neutral.<sup>83</sup> This amounts to saying that evil is a child of the imagination and is of no more substantial existence than dreams. It is difficult to see how this kind of a philosophy will encourage people to make a better world.

The result of looking upon man as the final judge of all the earth is seen in the attitude which Sellars takes toward the problem of sin. He regards it as a mistake which is so insignificant that it ought not to perturb one.<sup>84</sup> It requires some imagination to see how such an attitude will produce a high morality. Past experience has taught us that when society has regarded sin as a light offence, it has paid for its mistake by its life. Such callousness has never resulted in any high regard for personality. Potter and Sellars are defeating their own cause by attempting to look upon moral failure as of little consequence. Furthermore, if man sets his own standards there is no reason to believe that they will continue to be high. Who knows but that man, tired of the fight to achieve the best, may become discouraged in the fight and lower his standards? Perfection is a distant and difficult goal. The glory of Christianity has been that it counselled perfection; the greatness of man has been in his constant attempt to reach that ever-receding goal. When Sellars counsels that we should not try for perfection<sup>85</sup> because it is impossible, he is dealing high

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<sup>83</sup>Sellars, RCA, 154; Supra, 60-61.

<sup>84</sup>Sellars, NSR, 181.







morality a fatal blow.

Sellars does nothing but weaken his argument when he contends that religion has not helped the evolution of morality to any degree, but on the whole has rather retarded moral progress.

<sup>86</sup> He thinks that high morality has resulted from the growth of culture. This is a very prejudiced view to say the least. Any student of history knows the tremendous moral influence the religious leaders have had on society. From the times of the prophets until the present there have been prophetic voices which sounded a clarion call for society to make itself clean. Whether it has been Isaiah and a degenerate Jewry or Wesley and a callous Eighteenth Century England, the religious message has raised the moral standards. Indeed, history proves that moral standards have never existed among any people without some religious sanction. Ellwood, the great American sociologist, seems to state the matter so well that no further discussion is necessary.

Now the mores of a people are all powerful, but they are such only because they are imbedded in religious sanctions. They begin to crumble and disintegrate as soon as the particular religious belief or sanction which accompanied them passes away. But with them crumbles and disintegrates the civilization of which they are a part. We have no record of a civilization which long endured which did not have this religious setting for its mores; nor of any which endured long after the setting was dissolved.<sup>87</sup>

8. Disregard of religious experience. Even a casual

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<sup>85</sup>Ibid., 182.

<sup>86</sup>Sellars, NSR, 173.

<sup>87</sup>Ellwood, ROR, 34-35. See also Balfour, TAT, 251.



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gration of belief they are a sorry sight. I have no  
words of a civilization which has lost its belief in God and  
has left no religious sanction for its mores; not of any which  
endured long after the sanction was dissolved.

3. Distortion of religious experience. Even a casual

82 Ibid., 133.  
83 Bellars, MCR, 173.  
84 Milwood, MCR, 54-55. See also Milwood, MCR, 131.

reader of Potter and Sellars will be struck by the poverty of the religion which they present. It is over-intellectualized and under-emotionalized. It is rather strange that they have so completely disregarded the emotional side of religion, for Sellars realizes that "morality is too cold a word for the ears of men."<sup>88</sup> Despite this Sellars presents a system which is as cold as the Arctic, is aimed at the intellect and refuses to recognize the emotions. Potter considers self-sacrifice to be a grandstand gesture, a sheer display of sentimentalism which accomplishes little real good.<sup>89</sup> Not all humanists would agree with Potter at this point however.<sup>90</sup> In Potter's directions for spiritual growth,<sup>91</sup> we note that he puts self-recognition first and self-giving last, thus the intellect is put first and the emotions last. Had Potter thought less of theory and more of experience when he wrote this, he might have reversed the order. In many cases our affections move us to action when our wills would not. The verdict of history is that no system of morality or religion ever continued to exist when not supported by both intellect and affection. The sudden rise and the still more sudden decline of Deism and Positivism revealed the folly of attempting to found any religion on the assumption that man possesses a brain but no heart.

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<sup>88</sup>Sellars, NSR, 221.

<sup>89</sup>Potter, HUM, 28-30.

<sup>90</sup>Walker says, "While I cannot accept the orthodox Christian theology, I accept the essence of Christianity, which is self-sacrifice," HAWL, 82-83.



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<sup>88</sup> Bellars, *ibid.*, 221.

<sup>89</sup> Potter, *ibid.*, 23-25.

<sup>90</sup> Langer says, "While I cannot accept the orthodox Christian theology, I accept the essence of Christianity, which is self-sacrifice." Langer, *ibid.*, 22-23.

Potter and Sellars refuse to take a scientific attitude when considering the phenomenon of religious experience. They seem incapable of understanding the Christian conception of fellowship between God and man. This failure to understand, however, cannot justify their attitude. They may criticize the fruits of religion, but they cannot be scientifically minded and deny religious experience. This is a polite way of telling a few million people they are fooling themselves. The individual who has been a living contact with the cosmos cannot be accused of impertinence if he asks Potter and Sellars if they have any right to tell him he is suffering from hallucinations.

It is true that they do not know what it means, it is extinct for them, of course, until they get it, just as it is for everybody else, but if once they get it they might realize that it is still a going force in human affairs.<sup>92</sup>

These words of a modern magazine editor are a pertinent answer to those who deny the validity of religious experience.

#### D. The Pessimism of their Thought.

1. Futility of the Fight. It has been more and more apparent as we investigated the philosophy of Potter and Sellars that its ultimate goal is the "Slough of Despond." Nobody could look out into such a world as Potter and Sellars present and not feel a sense of failure. Indeed, Sellars realizes that the prospects are not bright and never can be.<sup>93</sup> Life, after all,

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<sup>91</sup>Potter, HUM, 20.

<sup>92</sup>Martin, HRGG, 782.

<sup>93</sup>Sellars, NSR, 167-168.



Butter and butter refuse to take a scientific attitude when considering the phenomenon of religious experience. They seem incapable of understanding the Christian conception of relationship between God and man. This failure to understand, however, cannot justify their attitude. They may criticize the truths of religion, but they cannot be scientifically minded and easy religious experience. This is a polite way of telling a few million people they are fooling themselves. The individual who has been a living contact with the cosmos cannot be accused of ignorance if he asks Butter and Butter if they have any right to tell him he is suffering from hallucinations.

It is true that they do not know what it means, it is existed for them, of course, until they get it, just as it is for everybody else, but it once they get it they might realize that it is still a going force in human affairs. These words of a modern magazine editor are a pertinent answer to those who deny the validity of religious experience.

#### 9. The Possibility of their Teaching.

##### 1. Existence of the Truth. It has been said and more

apparent as we investigated the philosophy of Butter and Butter that the ultimate goal is the "bliss of heaven." Nobody would look into such a world as Butter and Butter present and not feel a sense of failure. Indeed, Butter believes that the prospects are not bright and never can be. <sup>25</sup> But, after all,

Butter, M.D., 20.  
 Butter, M.D., 20.  
 Butter, M.D., 20-25.

is an amateurish affair and tragedy often stalks abroad ruthlessly slaying human hopes and aspirations. There is no God who has an interest in the world and it is vain to look to the cosmos for purpose or plan. We are the children of nature but our parent is indifferent to our desires and our ideals. We are condemned to failure because our spirits are limited to time and space. Such a picture is hardly one to cheer our hearts and lighten our burdens. It is rather difficult to see how Potter can hope for the development of perfect personalities in such a world.

Potter and Sellars feel satisfied despite the loss of their cosmic companion, because with him have gone a host of superstitious fears.<sup>94</sup> Other writers in the humanist tradition show that Potter and Sellars have made a bad bargain, because the universe without God contains more fear than a universe with God, even a supernatural one. Bert~~z~~and Russell and Joseph Wood Krutch are under no illusions as to the kind of a universe Potter and Sellars have described.

In general we have grown used to a godless universe but we are not yet accustomed to one which is loveless as well and only when we so become shall we realize what atheism really means.<sup>95</sup>

Clarence Darrow, as famous for his atheism as for his ability as a criminal lawyer, in commenting on his life says that he has kept company with dreams which shall never come to pass. He has believed in his dreams so much that he has been

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<sup>94</sup>Sellars, RCA, 299.



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In general we have grown used to a godless universe and  
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Clement D. Ross, as evidence for his assertion that the  
ability as a criminal lawyer, in connection with his life says  
that he has kept company with dreams which will never come to  
pass. He has believed in his dreams so much that he has been

practically unconscious of life. "The fact that I have been measurably successful in....life itself has made existence tolerable."<sup>96</sup> One cannot read his article without feeling that there is the pathetic note of hopelessness in it. If the only way we can make life tolerable is to become unconscious of it, the business of living is a burden. The futility of the fight and the hopelessness of the struggle is written large across the face of such a philosophy as Potter and Sellars present.

2. Denial of Immortality. The only word of counsel Potter and Sellars can offer us when we inquire about the future life is to inform us that death is the price we pay for life.<sup>97</sup> Sellars believes that our souls become set in middle life and after that they are only slightly capable of "lifting up into a region of the more abiding values of human existence."<sup>98</sup> Anybodybody but a humanist would call this pessimism. Sellars imagines that he finds a confirmation of his views (1) in the fact that the doctrine of immortality is not mentioned in the Old Testament<sup>99</sup> and (2) because the only experts in the field, the psychologists and philosophers, have ceased to believe in immortality.<sup>100</sup> Neither contention is correct, because the

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<sup>95</sup>Krutch, MT, 114.

<sup>96</sup>Darrow, WIH, 505.

<sup>97</sup>Sellars, RCA, 198.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 199.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 87.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., 178-179.



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immortality. The latter contention is correct, but the

28 Ibid., IV, 114.

29 Ibid., VII, 202.

30 Ibid., VII, 192.

31 Ibid., 193.

32 Ibid., 27.

33 Ibid., 192-193.

doctrine of immortality is mentioned in the Old Testament<sup>101</sup> and not all psychologists and philosophers deny immortality.<sup>102</sup> If philosophers are experts on the subject, the verdict of some of them would not be very complimentary to Sellars. Leighton says,

"How absurd it is to suppose that the individual power which is the highest form of creativeness in the universe can pass into nothingness! This power is the rational ethical spirit personality."<sup>103</sup>

The denial of the continued existence of personality is in reality a denial of the worth of the individual--<sup>104</sup> a doctrine precious to the heart of a humanist. In a valueless universe personality evolves and eventually perishes; this is hardly a hopeful message for those who prize the high things of life. So it seems that humanism which begins by telling of the glory and greatness of personality ends by confessing that personality is a theory of the moment, unworthy of eternal life. Thus, it becomes evident that theism, despised and rejected by Potter and Sellars, remains the true and consistent prophet of the infinite worth of human personality.

Potter and Sellars both find comfort in the idea that what we work for survives.<sup>105</sup> But not even this solace can be allowed them, for science is quite apt to speak of the

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<sup>101</sup>II Samuel 12:23; Isaiah 36:19; Daniel 12:2,3; see also Burney, IHI, Lectures III, IV, 55-105.

<sup>102</sup>Brightman, ITP, 346-349; Hocking, MGHE, 514, 530-523; Strickland, PRG, 296-314.

<sup>103</sup>Leighton, RMT, 331.

<sup>104</sup>Vernon, IRD, 79.



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Barney, III, Lectures III, IV, 88-102.

<sup>102</sup> Berkman, ITP, 345-349; Focking, MHR, 514, 530-535;  
Starkland, PRG, 338-314.

<sup>103</sup> Solinus, RMP, 331.

<sup>104</sup> Vernon, IED, 75.

eventual extinction of life and mind on the earth. It appears that Potter and Sellars have given up the old guide--theism--to follow to the new guide,--science,--only to have the latter turn and attack them. They, indeed, live in a dark world, and if despite their knowledge of their tragic plight, they can still serve their generation, we honor them, but having discovered the poverty of their humanism, we wish them no disciples.

<sup>105</sup>Potter, HR, 250; Sellars, RCA, 273.



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Foster, H., 250; Bellars, H., 250.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY

An attempt will be made in this chapter to sum up the main conclusions of the study. There are several types of humanism; the five chief ones being, Renaissance, pragmatic, literary, Christian, and religious. In general, religious humanism may be defined as "religion without God." Among the humanists there is a wide divergence of opinion, some being agnostics, others atheists.

Charles Francis Potter was at first a theist. He became a humanist less than a decade ago. Potter is an agnostic who holds that theism has handicapped humanity. Theism he thinks to be unnecessary since man is an adequate substitute for God. Man possesses all the qualities which are needed to make him the ruler of the universe. If man has faith in himself, he can do all things. Potter regards Jesus as a high-minded Jew of the first century, but a person totally inadequate to serve as an ideal for the present day.

The main emphases of Potter is put on the word "personality." Personality is of supreme value and it is self-perfectible. It is the symbol of life and the goal of history; therefore, the development of personality is the chief task of humanism. Prayer and worship are purely subjective; therefore, they should be abandoned or replaced by meditation. Right conduct is right action, and the latter comes by education,



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The main emphasis of Potter is put on the word "personality." Personality is of supreme value and it is self-educative. It is the symbol of life and the goal of history; therefore, the development of personality is the chief task of humanism. Prayer and worship are purely subjective; therefore, they should be abandoned or replaced by meditation. Right conduct is right action, and the latter comes by education.

and development. To insure moral conduct desire must be trained. Self-sacrifice is more sensational than useful, therefore the idea should be supplanted by self-giving. The individual's attitude toward society should be in the words and the spirit of the Golden Rule. Cooperation is necessary for the building of the perfect society.

Potter has a great faith in the future of society because he has a great faith in man. Present society will only become improved when men begin to believe in their own powers and when they humanize the institutions and culture of the land. Machines controlled by men will have a large part in the building of the new society. Purpose is limited to man, the world having purpose only because we assign purpose to it. Immortality is one of the superstitious doctrines which belongs to a discredited theism. The only immortality we have is the immortality of influence.

Roy Wood Sellars believes that God is but a projection of man's highest aspirations. When we think objectively, Sellars contends, we do not think about God but rather about the physical universe. There is no need of a postulate of God, because evolutionary naturalism has proved that there was no First Cause; the world never had a beginning. The Bible he condemns as an unreliable book since scholarship cannot prove anything of importance even about the New Testament. The Gospels themselves come from unknown sources, the work of unknown writers. Jesus was a young man who thought he had a commission to preach; in the course of his preaching he offended



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the Jewish authorities, which caused his death. Jesus has no significance for our lives today.

Man is the child of nature, according to Sellars. Man is a product of emergent evolution. Human personality is the highest thing in the world since it is able to create. Values are a part of man's life and have no relation to the cosmos. The spiritual is the whole realm of human endeavor. Personality depends on biological evolution and social environment. Morals are the result of tribal custom, and conscience is but the reproduction of the group standard of morality. Christianity has promoted an hedonistic code of ethics, which has made little contribution to the ethical progress of the world. Humanism teaches that morality is expression and not repression. Sin in our lives is a sign that we have failed to some extent; we should regret this, but not let it perturb us. The doctrine of immortality is false, because naturalism has shown that both mind and body must be assigned to the organism.

Sellars says there is no purpose in the universe; all is causality. The world is to be explained by the idea of growth. Order in nature is not the result of purpose, but of growth and adjustment. Evil is not objective, but is only a name which we give to certain causal events which in themselves are neutral. Good and evil are both subjective terms. Naturalism is a scientific philosophy which explains all things by the evolution of the physical.

In comparing the two men we conclude that Potter is a popular agnostic and that Sellars is a philosophical atheist.



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In comparing the two men we conclude that Spinoza is a

popular agnostic and that Spinoza is a philosophical atheist.



God, to both of them, is but a term meaning the projection of man's highest ideals. Potter has more faith in science than Sellars has. The greatest difference between them is that Potter recognizes a cosmic energy which is outside of man, while Sellars does not. Both stress the fact that man is king in the universe, but Potter has more faith in man's achievement than Sellars has. Both deny immortality. Potter has little to say about the physical world, while Sellars emphasizes the theory of emergent evolution. Potter both affirms and denies purpose in the universe, while Sellars emphatically denies it.

The value of humanism is seen in the fact that it is ethical, pragmatic, and social. The chief defect in the writings of Potter and Sellars is their tendency to state many general conclusions. They err in defining terms, for instance explaining the supernatural in the terms of eighteenth century theology. They affirm that they have the scientific approach to the problems of religion, yet make many sweeping statements which cannot be substantiated by the facts. Sellars is especially guilty at this point, as he makes many statements in reference to psychology, sociology, and physics which are his opinions but which he nevertheless leads you to think are scientific facts.

The chief defect of humanism as presented by Potter and Sellars is its limited range of the concept of religion. (1) Humanism cannot lay claim to the title "religion" because it does not comply with any historical or standard definitions of the word "religion. (2) They deny the presence of a divine



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personality in the universe. Potter is mistaken in supposing that science can either prove or disprove the idea of God; furthermore, he contradicts himself when he postulates a cosmic energy which is outside of and controls man. Sellars errs in thinking that the description of a process is the same as the explanation of origins. (3) The belief in man as a worthy substitute for God is both shallow and, thus far, untenable. Furthermore, they themselves prove that God is man's highest ideal, and if this idea of God is superstition then man at his best has succeeded only in harming humanity. (4) They take a negative attitude toward the universe, which disregard cannot be justified since the universe controls man ultimately. (5) Their belief in the subjectivity of values leads them to defend a dualism of man who creates values and a universe devoid of values. (6) The substitution of causality for purpose explains nothing; causality merely describes. (7) Their theory that morality has no connection with religion is disproved by history. (8) The disregard of religious experience is a fatal weakness, since no coherent philosophy can fail to take into account so evident and important a phenomenon in human life.

The ultimate end of humanism is pessimism, since it makes man a victim of the universe which he is told to disregard. The denial of immortality is a denial of the worth of human personality. We conclude that humanism, which begins by exalting the great worth and eternal significance of personality, ends by denying these two principles.



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## APPENDIX

### A HUMANIST MANIFESTO

The time has come for widespread recognition of the radical changes in religious beliefs throughout the modern world. The time is past for mere revision of traditional attitudes. Science and economic change have disrupted the old beliefs. Religions the world over are under the necessity of coming to terms with new conditions created by a vastly increased knowledge and experience. In every field of human activity, the vital movement is now in the direction of a candid and explicit humanism. In order that religious humanism may be better understood we, the undersigned, desire to make certain affirmations which we believe the facts of our contemporary life demonstrate.

There is great danger of a final, and we believe, fatal, identification of the word religion with doctrines and methods which have lost their significance and which are powerless to solve the problem of human living in the Twentieth Century. Religions have always been means for realizing the highest values of life. Their end has been accomplished through the interpretation of the total environing situation (theology or world view), the sense of values resulting therefrom (goal or ideal), and the technique (cult) established for realizing the satisfactory life. A change in any of these factors results in alteration of the outward forms of religion. This fact explains







the changefulness of religions through the centuries. But through all changes religion itself remains constant in its quest for abiding values, an inseparable feature of human life.

Today man's larger understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and his deeper appreciation of brotherhood, have created a situation which requires a new statement of the means and purposes of religion. Such a vital, fearless, and frank religion capable of furnishing adequate social goals and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a complete break with the past. While this age does owe a vast debt to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a synthesizing and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. To establish such a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. We therefore affirm the following:

First: Religious humanists regard the universe as self-existing and not created.

Second: Humanism believes that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of continuous process.

Third: Holding an organic view of life, humanists find that the traditional dualism of mind and body must be rejected.

Fourth: Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as clearly depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely



The objectiveness of religion is a question. But through all changes religion itself remains constant in its quest for divine values, an inseparable feature of human life. Today man's latest understanding of the universe, his scientific achievements, and his deeper exploration of brotherhood, have created a religion which brings a new assessment of the nature and purposes of religion. Such a vital, dynamic, and intense religion capable of furnishing adequate social norms and personal satisfactions may appear to many people as a step back into the past. While this may seem a step back to the traditional religions, it is none the less obvious that any religion that can hope to be a satisfying and dynamic force for today must be shaped for the needs of this age. It is a fact that a religion is a major necessity of the present. It is a responsibility which rests upon this generation. It is therefore set forth as follows:

- First: Religion humanizes regard the universe as self-existing and not created.
- Second: Humanistic beliefs that man is a part of nature and that he has emerged as the result of continuous progress.
- Third: Holding an organic view of life, humankind that that the spiritual, mental or mind and body must be respected.
- Fourth: Humanism recognizes that man's religious culture and civilization, as already depicted by anthropology and history, are the product of a gradual development due to his interaction with his natural environment and with his social heritage. The individual born into a particular culture is largely



moulded by that culture.

Fifth: Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values. Obviously humanism does not deny the possibility of realities as yet undiscovered, but it does insist that the way to determine the existence and value of any and all realities is by means of intelligent inquiry and by the assessment of their relation to human needs. Religion must formulate its hopes and plans in the light of the scientific spirit and method.

Sixth: We are convinced that the time has passed for theism, deism, modernism, and the several varieties of "new thought."

Seventh: Religion consists of those actions, purposes, and experiences which are humanly significant. Nothing human is alien to the religious. It includes labour, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation--all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living. The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained.

Eighth: Religious humanism considers the complete realization of human personality to be the end of man's life and seeks its development and fulfilment in the here and now. This is the explanation of the humanist's social passion.

Ninth: In place of the old attitudes involved in worship and prayer the humanist finds his religious emotions expressed in a heightened sense of personal life and in cooperative effort



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to promote social well-being.

Tenth: It follows that there will be no uniquely religious emotions and attitudes of the kind hitherto associated with belief in the supernatural.

Eleventh: Man will learn to face the crises of life in terms of his knowledge of their naturalness and probability. Reasonable and manly attitudes will be fostered by education and supported by custom. We assume that humanism will take the path of social and mental hygiene and discourage sentimental and unreal hopes and wishful thinking.

Twelfth: Believing that religion must work increasingly for joy in living, religious humanists aim to foster the creative in man and to encourage achievements that add to the satisfactions of life.

Thirteenth: Religious humanism maintains that all associations and institutions exist for the fulfilment of human life. The intelligent evaluation, transformation, control, and direction of such associations and institutions with a view to the enhancement of human life is the purpose and program of humanism. Certainly religious institutions, their ritualistic forms, ecclesiastical methods, and communal activities must be reconstituted as rapidly as experience allows, in order to function effectively in the modern world.

Fourteenth: The humanists are firmly convinced that the existing acquisitive and profit motivated society has shown itself to be inadequate and that a radical change in methods, controls, and motives must be instituted. A socialized and cooper-



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ative economic order must be established to the end that the equitable distribution of the means of life be possible. The goal of humanism is a free and universal society in which people voluntarily and intelligently cooperate for the common good. Humanists demand a shared life in a shared world.

Fifteenth and last: We assert that humanism will: (a) affirm life rather than deny it; (b) seek to elicit the possibilities of life, not flee from it, and (c) endeavour to establish the conditions of a satisfactory life for all, not merely for the few. By this positive morale and intention humanism will be guided, and from this perspective and alignment the techniques and efforts of humanism will flow.

So stand the theses of religious humanism. Though we consider the religious forms and ideas of our fathers no longer adequate, the quest for the good life is still the central task for mankind. Man is at last becoming aware that he alone is responsible for the realization of the world of his dreams, that he has within himself power for its achievement. He must set intelligence and will to the task.

Signed:

J. A. C. Fagginer Auer; Parkman Professor of Church History and Theology, Harvard University; Professor of Church History, Tufts College.

E. Burdette Backus; Unitarian Minister.

Harry Elmer Barnes; General Editorial Department, Scripps-Howard Newspapers.

L. M. Birkhead; The Liberal Center, Kansas City, Mo.



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Members:

J. A. C. Fletcher, A.B.; Professor of Church History

and Theology, Harvard University; Professor of Church

History, Bates College.

E. S. Redgate, A.B.; Unitarian Minister.

Harry Elmer Barnes; General Historical Department, College

Howard University.

L. M. Kirkhead; The Liberal Center, Kansas City, Mo.

Raymond B. Bragg; Secretary, the Western Unitarian Conference.

Edwin Arthur Burt; Professor of Philosophy in the Sage School of Philosophy, Cornell University.

Ernest Caldecott; Minister, First Unitarian Church, Los Angeles.

A. J. Carlson; Professor of Physiology, University of Chicago.

John Dewey; Columbia University.

Albert C. Dieffenbach; Formerly Editor of the Christian Register; Minister, the Unitarian Church in Newton Center, Mass.

John H. Dietrich; Minister, First Unitarian Society of Minneapolis.

Bernard Fantus, M. D.; Professor of Therapeutics, College of Medicine, University of Illinois.

William Floyd; Editor of the Arbitrator, New York City.

F. H. Hankins; Professor of Economics and Sociology, Smith College.

A. Eustace Haydon; Professor of History of Religions, University of Chicago.

Llewellyn Jones; Literary Critic and Author.

Robert Morss Lovett; Editor of The New Republic; Professor of English, University of Chicago.

Harold P. Marley; Minister, The Fellowship of Liberal Religion, Ann Arbor, Mich.

R. Lester Mondale; Minister, Unitarian Church, Evanston, Ill.

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John Herman Randall, Jr.; Department of Philosophy, Columbia



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 Charles Francis Foster: Founder and Teacher, The First Humanistic  
 R. Lester Mondak: Minister, Unitarian Church, Evanston, Ill.  
 Ann Arbor, Mich.  
 Harold P. Murray: Minister, The Fellowship of Liberal Religion  
 Jackson, University of Chicago.  
 Robert Mott Lovett: Editor of The New Republic; Professor of  
 Elizabeth Jones: Literary Critic and Author.  
 City of Chicago.  
 A. Ernest Hayden: Professor of History at Michigan, Univer-  
 College.  
 F. H. Hankins: Professor of Economics and Sociology, Michi-  
 William Kibbe: Editor of The Critic, New York City.  
 Medicine, University of Illinois.  
 Bernard F. Slater, M.D.: Professor of Pathology, College of  
 epolis.  
 John H. Dierbeck: Minister, First Unitarian Society of Minne-  
 ter; Minister, The Unitarian Church in Newton Center, Mas-  
 Albert G. Dierbeck: Formerly Editor of The Unitarian Revis-  
 John Dewey: Columbia University.  
 A. J. Carlson: Professor of Psychology, University of Chicago.  
 Ernest G. Schuchman: Minister, First Unitarian Church, Los Ange-  
 School of Philosophy, Cornell University.  
 David Foster: Professor of Philosophy in the Sage  
 Bernard H. Jones: Secretary, The Western Unitarian Conference

# University.

Curtis W. Reese; Dean, Abraham Lincoln Center, Chicago.

Oliver L. Reiser; Associate Professor of Philosophy, University of Pittsburgh.

Roy Wood Sellars; Professor of Philosophy, University of Michigan.

Clinton Lee Scott; Minister, Universalist Church, Peoria, Ill.

Maynard Shipley; President, Science League of America.

W. Frank Swift; Director, Boston Ethical Society.

V. T. Thayer; Educational Director, Ethical Culture Schools.

Eldred C. Vanderlaan; Leader of the Free Fellowship, Berkeley, Calif.

Joseph Walker; Attorney, Boston, Mass.

Jacob J. Weinstein; Rabbi, Adviser to Jewish Students, Columbia University.

Frank S. C. Wicks; All Souls Unitarian Church, Indianapolis, Ind.

David Rhys Williams; Minister, Unitarian Church, Rochester, N. Y.

Edwin H. Wilson; Managing Editor, The New Humanist, Chicago.

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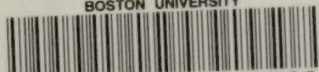
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